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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH COMMONWEALTH DRAMA

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Perhaps the obscurest chapter in the history of English literature is that of the drama during the period of the Great Rebellion (1642-1660). Almost nothing has been written on this period, and apart from a few scattered jottings by Professor C. H. Firth in *Notes and Queries* and by Professor J. Q. Adams in *Shakespearean Playhouses*, our knowledge has advanced very little since the early researches of Edmond Malone and his successor, John Payne Collier. Presumably Professor George C. D. Odell's *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (1920) has summarized knowledge to date; yet his history of the so-called dramatic interregnum runs to only three and a half pages, and fully half of it is quoted from James Wright's *Historia Histrionica* (1699). Nobody, apparently, has been sufficiently interested in the period to think of making a serious study of the huge collection of news-books, pamphlets, and single sheets amassed during the years 1640-1660 by the London printer George Thomason, though this collection is accessible to readers at the British Museum and is inevitably the ultimate source for a historical account of the Commonwealth stage. As a result, such a slip as Collier's in giving two dates for a surreptitious stage-performance has caused endless perplexity and confusion: almost every writer on the drama calls attention to the discrepancy; but nobody has made an effort to check up the sheets Collier cited.

The present article does not pretend to be a definitive history: it is, instead, a modest contribution to such a history, which may

help some later student in dealing finally with the subject. Recently it was my fortune to examine with some care complete files of twenty or thirty news-books in the Thomason Collection and to glance rapidly through many of the pamphlets and broadsides. My purpose in doing so, however, was rather to collect material for a history of the ballad than a history of the drama—a purpose that prevented so thorough a search for facts connected with the stage as otherwise would have been given.

But within these limitations the article presents much new material. It forms the first coherent story of the Commonwealth drama. It shows beyond all dispute that theatrical productions never ceased, in spite of the active and relentless hostility of the government. It presents many new facts about the actors, notably “the Turk” and Robert Cox; calls attention to eight or nine hitherto unrecorded raids by soldiers on surreptitious performances in playhouses; and points out significant parallels to these raids in the provinces. More remarkable still are the public advertisements of stage-performances that I have culled from the news-books; while a bit of interest and coherence is given to the story by a rapid view of the operation of the laws directed against ballads and unlicensed news-sheets. Ballad-lore, too, has been called into service.

As the documents themselves are obviously of far more value than my own remarks can be, I have printed in full most of those I cite, usually retaining the exact spelling and punctuation. Unless otherwise specified, these documents are to be found in the Thomason Collection; and from Thomason’s own manuscript notes many of the dates are taken. In every case I have given the dates of years (*i. e.*, from January 1 through March 24) according to the new style.

When the first ordinance for the suppression of playhouses was issued, the London theatres were in a far from prosperous condition. For one thing, plagues had caused a suppression of plays in 1635 and in 1636-1637. During the latter interval of a year and a half the actors fell into desperate straits, which the reopening of the theatres did not alleviate. For one reason or another, too, the players ran foul of the civil authorities. Thus in May, 1639, actors at the Fortune theatre were “fined £1000 for

setting up an altar, a bason, and two candlesticks, and bowing down before it upon the stage; and although they allege it was an old play revived, and an altar to the heathen gods, yet it was apparent that this play was revived on purpose in contempt of the ceremonies of the Church."¹ At the Red Bull, in September, 1639, Andrew Cane and others performed a play called *The Whore New Vamped*, which aroused the ire of the Privy Council. The Council at once ordered the Attorney-General to investigate and punish the author, actors, and licenser of the play.² At the Phoenix, or Cockpit, in Drury Lane, in the spring of 1640, William Beeston, Governor of the King's and Queen's Boys, produced without license a play, offensive to Charles I, that "had relation to the passages of the King's journey into the north, and was complained of by His Majesty to me [Sir Henry Herbert], with command to punish the offenders." As a result, for several days the company was forbidden to act, and not long afterward Beeston was removed as Governor in favor of Davenant.³ The King's Men at the Blackfriars, however, were evidently anticipating a prosperous future when, on July 24, 1641, they made out a list of sixty plays in their repertory which they forbade the members of the Stationers' Company ever to print.⁴

Important, then, as showing the decay of the theatres under the ban of plagues and under the pressure exerted both by the government and by general social unrest is the oft-quoted pamphlet called *The Stage-Players Complaint. In A pleasant Dialogue betweene Cane of the Fortune, and Reed of the Friers. Deploring their sad and solitary conditions for want of Employment. In this heavie and Contagious time of the Plague in London* (September, 1641).⁵ Both Cane and Reed will be met later in attempts to evade Parliament's orders against stage-performances. Here they show that all actors were fearfully anticipating drastic legislation: Monopolers are downe, Projectors are downe, the High Commission Court

¹ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1639*, p. 140; J. Q. Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 288.

² *Malone Society Collections*, v, 394.

³ *Malone, Variorum Shakespeare*, III, 241; Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, 1879, II, 32; Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, pp. 360 f.

⁴ *Malone Society Collections*, v, 364.

⁵ W. C. Hazlitt, *The English Drama and Stage, 1543-1664*, 1869, pp. 253 ff.

is downe, the Starre-Chamber is down, & (some think) Bishops will downe, and why should we then that are farre inferior to any of those not justly feare, least we should be downe too?

The pamphlet concludes dolefully with a litany: "From Plague, Pestilence, and Famine, from Battell, Murder, and suddaine Death: Good Lord deliver us." Only a few months earlier (in June) had appeared satirical broadsides called *The Late* [and *The last*] *Will and Testament of the Doctors Commons*,⁶ which contain these provisions:

Item, I will and bequeath all my large Bookes of Acts, to them of the Fortune Play-House, for I hold it a deed of charity, in regard they want good action.

All my great Books of Acts to be divided between the Fortune and the Bull; for they spoyle many a good Play for want of Action.

Perhaps because of the scarcity of public performances London printers now began to publish many brief satirical pamphlets on current affairs, arranged in acts and scenes and often libelous to a degree. Among these miniature dramas are *Canterburie His Change of Diot*,⁷ a satire on Laud, and *Mercurius Britanicus, Or The English Intelligencer. A Tragic-Comedy, at Paris. Acted with great Applause*.⁸ At Christmas, 1641, only one play—Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, was acted at Court, and neither the King nor Queen attended.⁹ On February 28, Charles I left London; and in June Sir Henry Herbert closed his Revels accounts with the entry of a play called *The Irish Rebellion*: "Here," he wrote, "ended my allowance of plays, for the war began in August, 1642."¹⁰

In spite of the outbreak of Civil War, on September 2, 1642—when the first law of suppression was issued—seven London play-

⁶ British Museum, 669. fol. 4 (18 and 20).

⁷ Reproduced in Ashbee's *Occasional Fac-simile Reprints*.

⁸ British Museum, E. 172 (34).

⁹ Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage*, p. 351. In "The Prologue . . . To A Comedie Presented, At the Entertainment of the Prince His Highnesse, by the Schollers of Trinity College in Cambridge, in March last, 1641[1/2]" (E. 144/9), it is stated that "We perish, if the *Round-heads* be about" and that "Our only hope is that this play will escape the Puritans because it was made extempore."

¹⁰ Collier, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Poetry*, 1879, II, 36.

houses were, it seems, giving performances: Salisbury Court, Blackfriars, the Globe, the Fortune, the Red Bull, the Drury Lane Cockpit (or Phoenix), and the Hope, though the last was used only for animal baitings. After September 2 all were temporarily closed; and in the seventeen years that followed, only four of the seven—the Fortune, the Red Bull, Salisbury Court, and the Cockpit—are known to have been used for surreptitious performances. The Fortune itself dropped out of this unequal contest with Parliament early; the other three did not give up the fight, and the Red Bull, at least, managed to present plays with some regularity throughout the entire interregnum.

The ordinance of September 2, 1642, in solemn and dignified terms recited that "Whereas the distressed Estate of Ireland, steeped in her own Blood, and the distracted Estate of England, threatned with a Cloud of Blood, by a Civill Warre, call for all possible meanes to appease and avert the Wrath of God appearing in these Judgements," and "whereas publike Sports doe not well agree with publike Calamities, nor publike Stage-playes with the Seasons of Humiliation," it is therefore ordained "that while these sad Causes and set times of Humiliation doe continue, publike Stage-Playes shall cease, and bee forborne."¹¹ It is important to note that this edict forbids only public performances and is merely a temporary measure. From a political point of view it was entirely just, for the hostility of the players to Parliament, their loyalty to the King, was notorious. Without question, the stage would have been used to foment discontent and rebellion against Parliament.

To some of the actors the ordinance came as a death-knell; but the majority of actors, as well as many of the playwrights, had already taken up arms for the King. Davenant, a playwright whose work forms the chief connecting link between the Elizabethan and the Restoration drama, was early implicated in a plot against the Parliament. On May 8, 1641, a proclamation issued under the hand and seal of Charles I stated that

whereas *Henry Percy, Esquire, Henry Jermyn, Esquire, Sir John Sucklyn, Knight, William Davenant, and Captain Billingsly*, being by Order of the Lords in Parliament to be examined concernyng Designes of great danger

¹¹ A facsimile reproduction is added to Joseph Knight's reprint of John Downes's *Roscius Anglicanus*.

to the State, and mischievous wayes to prevent the happy successe and conclusion of this Parliament, have so absented and withdraw[n] themselves, as they cannot be examined: His Maiestie, by the advice of the said Lords in Parliament, doth strictly charge and command [these persons], to appear before the said Lords in Parliament at Westminster, within ten dayes after the date hereof, upon pain to incurre and undergo such forfeitures and punishments as the said Lords shall order and inflict upon them.¹²

Davenant's fortunes are reported with some regularity in ensuing numbers of *Diurnall Occurrences*. Thus on May 15 it announced that the House of Commons had learned that while the four others had escaped to France, "there was also a report from *Feversham*, that Master *Davenant* the Poet was taken there, who is by order of the House, sent for."¹³ On May 17 Davenant was brought "in a paire of Oares to the House, and from thence committed to the Serjeant at Armes, command being given that none should speak with him, but in the presence of the Serjeant, or one of his men."¹⁴

On May 18 he was examined by Parliament, and reexamined on June 3, June 5, and June 16. All five of the accused were found guilty on July 24, but on August 12 the Commons, after a great debate, held that Davenant's guilt was not well established.¹⁵ There is no need to follow further his adventures with the Parliament or on the battlefield, where he was knighted by the King for gallantry. It might be noted, however, that the *Parliament Scout* for July 18-25, 1644, reported that at a battle near York he was slain.

With so marked an example of disloyalty before them, the Parliament may readily be pardoned for its hostility to the stage. And this hostility was increased by the eagerness with which actors flocked to the royal army. James Wright's *Historia Histrionica* (1699) is the authority for the statement that "most of 'em, except *Lowin*, *Tayler* and *Pollard*, (who were superannuated) went into the King's Army, and like good Men and true, Serv'd their Old Master, tho' in a different, yet more honourable, Capacity. *Robinson*¹⁶ was Kill'd at the Taking of a Place (I think *Basing*

¹² British Museum, 816. m. 1 (36).

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 117, 119, 141, 312, 338.

¹⁶ Cf. Peter Cunningham, "Did General Harrison kill 'Dick Robinson' the Player?" *Shakespeare Society Papers*, II (1845), 11-13, and J. P. Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry and Annals of the Stage*, 1879, II, 39.

House) by *Harrison*, he that was after Hang'd at *Charing-cross*, who refused him Quarter, and Shot him in the Head when he had laid down his Arms; abusing Scripture at the same time, in saying, *Cursed is he that doth the Work of the Lord negligently.* *Mohun* was a Captain, (and after the Wars were ended here, served in *Flanders*, where he received Pay as a Major) *Hart* was a Lieutenant of Horse under Sir *Thomas Dallison*, in *Prince Rupert's*, Regiment, *Burt* was Cornet in the same Troop, and *Shatterel* Quarter-master. *Allen* of the *Cockpit*, was a Major, and Quarter Master General at *Oxford*." The *Perfect Diurnal* for October 24, 1642, tells of a player *Shanks* who deserted from the Parliamentary army rather than fight the King.¹⁷ "One *Knowles*, who was heretofore a dancer on the ropes, and also a jester to Master *John Punteus* the French Mountebanke, which travelled throughout this Kingdom," was said to have been a ringleader in the crime narrated in *A great Robbery in the North, Neer Swanton in Yorkshire; Showing How one Mr. Tailour was Robbed by a Company of Cavaliers* (July 12, 1642).

Other accounts of actor-soldiers abound. Thus in December, 1642, a satiric pamphlet called *Certaine Propositions Offered To The Consideration of The Honourable Houses of Parliament*¹⁸ remarked:

5. That being your sage Counsels have thought fit to vote downe Stage-Players roote and branch, but many even of the well affected to that Reformation have found, and hope hereafter to find, Play-house[s] most convenient, and happy places of meeting: and that now in this Bag-pipe Minstralsie weeke (I meane, this red packe of leasure dayes that is coming) there must be some Enterludes whether you will or no: You would be pleased to declare your selves, that you never meant to take away the calling of Stage-playes, but reforme the abuse of it; that is, that they bring no prophane plots, but take them out of the Scriptures all (as that of *Joseph* and his brethren would make the Ladies weepe: that of *David* and his Troubles would do pretty well for this present: and doubtlesse *Susanna* and the two Elders would be a *Scene* that would take above any that was ever yet presented). It would not be amisse too, if instead of the Musicke that playes betweene Acts, there were onely a Psalme sung for distinction sake. This might be easily brought to passe, if either the Court Play-writers be commanded to read the Scripture, or the City Scrip-

¹⁷ Collier, *op. cit.*, III, 486.

¹⁸ British Museum, E. 179 (28), p. 5; reprinted in the *Antiquarian Repository*, 1808, vol. III.

ture-Readers be commanded to write Playes. This as it would much advantage our Part, so it would much disadvantage the King's: for as by it wee should gaine a new place of Edifying, so Captaine *Trig*, and the rest of the Players which are now in service, would doubtlessly returne to their callings, and much lessen the King's Army.

Mercurius Anti-Britannicus,¹⁹ published at Oxford on August 11, 1645, refers to

the Players; who now in these sad times, have most of them of this side, turn'd Lieutenants, and Captains, as their fellows on the other side, have turn'd *Deacons*, and *Lay-elders*. For when the Stage at *Westminster*, where the two Houses now Act, is once more restored back againe to *Black-Fryers*, they have hope they shall returne to their old harmelesse profession of killing Men in Tragedies without Man-slaughter. Till then, they complaine very much that their profession is taken from them; and say 'twas never a good World, since the Lord *Viscount Say and Seale* succeeded *Joseph Taylor*.

After the battle of Naseby *Perfect Occurrences* (September 19-26, 1645) reported:

Nay the Kings very players are come in, having left Oxford, and throwne themselves upon the mercy of the Parliament, they offer to take the Covenant, & (if they may be accepted) are willing to put themselves into their service.²⁰

"I have not heard of one of these Players of any Note," added Wright, "that sided with the other Party, but only *Swanston*, and he profest himself a Presbyterian, took up the Trade of a Jeweller, and liv'd in *Aldermanbury*, within the Territory of Father *Calamy*. The rest either Lost, or expos'd their Lives for their King." To this lone example should be added John Harris—though he was hardly a player of note—described by *Mercurius Impartialis* (No. 1, p. 2) as "sometimes a Players Boy, a Rogue by the Statute; and since the suppression of Play-houses, hath betaken himself to the Profession of a Printer." For a time Harris remained at an Oxford printing shop, but later came to London, where he was hired by the Parliament to write an anti-royalist news-book called *Mercurius Militaris*.²¹ He seems to have been a thoroughly bad person, and his life reads like a picaresque novel. In 1649 he was one of the few witnesses who stood on the scaffold when Charles I

¹⁹ British Museum, E. 296(2).

²⁰ Noticed also by Collier in his *History of English Dramatic Poetry*.

²¹ *The Man in the Moon*, March 13-20, 1650.

was beheaded; in September, 1660, for theft and robbery he himself was hanged.²²

That all the actors did not enter the army is certain, though probably those who remained in London were either too old or too young for military service, while others may have gone abroad to act.²³ Nor were the stay-at-homes silent. One of them wrote the caustic "Players' Petition,"²⁴ addressing it to the "heroic nine or ten" who were controlling Parliament and the army.

O wise, misterious Synod, what shall we
Doe for such men as you, ere forty-three
Be halfe expir'd, & an vnlucky Season
Shall set a period to Trienniall treason?

But whilst you liue, our lowe peticon craues
That the King's true Subjectes & your Slaues
May, in our Comick Mirth & tragick rage,
Set vp the Theater & shew the Stage,
The shop of truth & Fancy, where we vow
Not to act any thing you disallow.
We will not dare at your strange votes to ieere,
Or personate K. P[ym], which your State Steeres.
Aspiring Cataline shalbe forgott,
Bloody Sejanus, or who ere would plot
Confusion to a State; the warrs betwixt
The Parliament & iust Henry the sixt
Shall haue no thought or muncan,²⁵ cause *their* power
Not only plact, but lost, him in *the* Tower;
Nor like the graue advice of learned Pim
Make a Malignant & then plunder him.
All these & such like Accons *that* may marr
Your learning Plottes & shew you what you are,
We will omitt, lest your Succession shake vm—

²² Cf. J. B. Williams, *A History of English Journalism*, pp. 106 f.

²³ Ward, *Hist. English Dramatic Literature*, III, 278, cites Karajan's *Abraham a Sancta Clara*, p. 113, note, for the mention of an English comedian at Vienna in 1654.

²⁴ A late copy is in *The Rump*, 1662, Part I, pp. 32-34, whence it is reprinted in Hazlitt's *English Drama and Stage*, pp. 272 ff. Much earlier copies, hitherto apparently unknown, are preserved in MS. Ashmole 47, fols. 132-133 (from which I quote) and MS. Rawlinson poet. 71, fols. 164v-168. There are great differences between the ms. and the printed texts.

²⁵ I. e., mention.

²⁶ Hazlitt, *English Drama and Stage*, pp. 259 ff.

want for old acquaintance sakes"; gone are the Fools, the door-keepers, the tire-men, the musicians; moths are devouring the costumes; while as for the playwrights, "some of them (if they have not been enforced to do it already) will be encited to enter themselves into Martin Parkers societie, and write ballads." As ballad-making was then the principal trade of London, "ballads being sold by whole hundreds in the city,"²⁷ playwrights could have found the change to ballad-writing profitable. Thomas Jordan, an actor who had also written several plays before 1642, did take up ballad-writing, in which, as was perhaps natural, he showed partiality for subjects made familiar by the Elizabethan stage. A large number of his ballads, afterward collected and published in *The Royal Arbor of Loyal Poesie* (1664), merely summarized the plots of *Philaster*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and other favorite plays. But ballads were soon to be placed under the same ban as plays, and stern measures were taken against their production and distribution.

Active resistance, too, to the ordinance soon developed. At the Fortune theatre no pretence was made of obeying the law: plays were given there often, and complaints of the performances were made to the Parliament. Sir Henry Mildmay²⁸ records in his diary seeing plays performed on August 20 and November 16, 1643, the latter performance being interrupted by soldiers. On October 2, 1643, the persistent players at the Fortune were interrupted in the midst of their play by a body of soldiers and violently despoiled of their costumes. The picturesque story as given by the *Weekly Account* (October 4, 1643)²⁹ runs thus:

The Players at the Fortune in Golding Lane, who had oftentimes been complained of, and prohibited the acting of wanton and licentious Playes, yet persevering in their forbidden Art, this day [Monday, October 2] there was set a strong guard of Pikes and muskets on both gates of the Play-house, and in the middle of their play they unexpectedly did presse into the Stage upon them, who (amazed at these new Actors) it turned their

²⁷ *The Scots Scouts Discoveries*, 1642 (*Phoenix Britannicus*, 1732, I, 466).

²⁸ Collier, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Poetry*, 1879, II, 38.

²⁹ In the summary of news on the first sheet of this pamphlet (British Museum, Burney 17) we read: "11. The players' misfortune at the Fortune in Golding Lane, their players' clothes being seized upon in the time of a play by authority from the Parliament"; this summary is quoted in the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Charles I*, 1641-43, p. 564.

Comedy into a Tragedy, and being plundered of all the richest of their cloathes, they left them nothing but their necessities now to act, and to learne a better life.

I have found no further record of attempts at playing in the Fortune before 1647. The Globe playhouse, too, was pulled down on April 15, 1644, to make room for tenements,³⁰ and its passing must have made more noticeable the hostile attitude of the Parliament towards stage-plays.

George Thomason has preserved a libel which he notes was written "by some Independant aganst L[or]d Gen. Essex and L[or]d of manchester and scatred about ye streets in the night," in which a complaint is made that Parliament is betrayed by "an open enemie," who "hath made use of Rouges [*sic*], Cutpurses, Players, Fidlers and Tinkers to forward a Reformation."³¹ The manifold hostile activities of actors and their repeated attempts at playing led to the passage of a further ordinance on October 20, 1645, for the Keeping of the Sabbath, directed at any person who "shall make, or resort unto any Playes, Interludes, Fencing," and so on.³² In the next year, however, Thomas May, ex-playwright

³⁰ According to a MS. note in a copy of a 1631 Stow's *Annales* preserved in the Phillipps collection at Cheltenham (printed both in the second edition of J. P. Collier's *Shakespeare* and by F. J. Furnivall in the *Academy*, xxii, 315), the Globe was "pulled downe to the ground, by Sr Matthew Brand. On Munday the 15 of April 1644., to make tenements in the roome of it." Cf. J. Q. Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 264.

³¹ This libel, the reference to which I have mislaid, Thomason dates December 9, 1644.

³² *Weekly Account*, October 18-22, 1645. A satirical reply to this ordinance is given in a pamphlet called *A Whip for an Ape*, the Thomason copy of which is dated August 29. "No recreation on Sundaies, nor Playes on workie dayes? Why what will become of us?" asks the author. He then turns, somewhat unexpectedly, to a denunciation of "the two *Germaine* Princes," Maurice and Rupert, who are helping "undoe their Uncle," Charles I:—"O the memorable acts of these bold Beacham's, not to be paraleld by those so often presented wth generall applause in the publique Theatre. These do not trust a companie of idle fellows to tell their stories for 'em in a Play-house, but make all England the Stage, wherewith fire and sword they Act their parts themselves, and they have past with such applause hitherto and have acted so to the Life, that if they doe but come off well, they shall be cry'd up for as absolute *Tragedians* as ever purchas'd infamie by killing their best friends: but 'tis to be fear'd there will be some danger i' the last Act, they that play the greatest parts in *Tragedies*, are commonly kil'd themselves in the conclusion, to the generall satisfaction of the Audience."

and then the historian of Parliament, wrote in verses prefixed to James Shirley's *Poems* (1646) that the theatres were "fitly silenc'd by the Lawes"; and one of them, the Cockpit in Drury Lane, seems actually to have been turned into a schoolhouse.³² Few literary men other than May can be found who applauded the suppression of plays. His own applause was no doubt due to political affiliations.

By 1647 the war was regarded at an end, and the actors professed to believe that the ordinance of 1642 no longer applied. The Salisbury Court, Cockpit, and Fortune playhouses are known to have begun performances, with little or no concealment, on a fairly regular schedule; the same thing was probably done at the Red Bull. That the Parliament itself had foreseen this step and that there had been some discussion of new measures of repression seems to be implied in a scurrilous pamphlet called *The Parliament of Ladies*,³⁴ which was issued on March 26, 1647:—"A motion was then made for putting down of playes, whereupon the Lady *Munmouth* desired it might be explained what playes were meant . . . answer being made, Stage-playes were only understood, shee declared shee would concurre with the House in that. . . ." A late and even coarser sequel, *The Ladies, A Second Time, Assembled In Parliament*³⁵ (August 13, 1647), gives valuable facts about the playhouses:—

The House then adjourned for that day, and on the morrow assembled againe, where the first thing they fell upon, was, a Complaint that was made against Players, who contrary to an Ordinance, had set up shop againe, and acted divers Playes, at the two houses, the Fortune, and Salisbury Court. Whereupon it was demanded what Plaies they were, and answer being given, that one of them was the scornefull Lady [by Beaumont and Fletcher], the house tooke it in high disdaine, and as an absolute contempt of their power; and therefore ordered that Alderman *Atkins* should make a journey on purpose to suppress them; and also ordered that an Act should be passed to prohibit that Play to be herafter acted; but divers Ladies were offended at this Order, intended for the suppressing of Playes, as the Lady *Munmouth*, . . . and the Lady *Stanford*, [who

³² "1646. Pd. and given to the teacher at the Cockpitt of the children, 6 d."—John Parton, *Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St. Giles in the Fields*, p. 235. Cf. Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 362.

³⁴ Bodleian, Wood 654 A, 12-13. Wood adds in ms. that "Hen. Nevill Esq." is the author.

³⁵ Bodleian, Wood 654 A, 10.

lik't] *Franke Beaumonts Play* so well, setting his *Scornfull Lady* aside, shee would often admit him in . . . a great confusion happening about this businesse of Playes, they at length concluded, that a Committee of Ladies should be chosen on purpose to consider of this businesse.

A puritanical writer of this period observed that "in the very streets hee might behold . . . Men and Women attired like Anticks and Stage-players."³⁶ Much of the objection strict Puritans had against the stage was due to the elaborate costumes of the players.

On July 16 the House of Commons passed an order requiring the Lord Mayor and the Justices of Peace of London and Middlesex "to take effectual Care speedily to suppress all publick Plays and Playhouses, and all Dancings on the Ropes."³⁷ Forwarded to the House of Lords, the order was there amended so as to include bear-baitings and to continue in effect until January 1, 1648. Curiously enough, some of the Lords objected to setting a time-limit, on the ground that the real intention of Parliament was to suppress plays forever. The Commons, however, accepted the bill as amended, and it was put into effect on July 17.³⁸

To this order little or no attention was paid. Plays—*The Scornful Lady* among them—were publicly acted at Salisbury Court, the Cockpit, and the Fortune. When on August 11 complaints of these illegal performances were made to the House of Commons, that body at first directed the Commander-in-Chief of the Guard of the House to suppress the theatres, but, reconsidering because of the dangerous plague season, ordered the "Justices of Peace and Committees of *Middlesex* and *Southwark*, to take special Care for the suppressing of *Stage Plays*, Bear and Bull-baitings, Dancing on the Ropes, &c."³⁹ This order affected not only the theatres where plays were being given but also the Hope, with its animal-baitings, the Red Bull, with its rope-dancing, and even Bartholomew Fair, with its wax-work and puppet-shows.

So far as it affected the revels of Bartholomew Fair, the ordinance was put into vigorous operation by John Warner, Lord Mayor

³⁶ *England Know thy Drivers and their Driver* (August 18, 1647), p. 2.

³⁷ *Journals of the House of Commons*, v, 246.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248; *Journals of the House of Lords*, ix, 334 f.; *Perfect Occurrences of Every Daie iournall*, July 16-23, p. 189.

³⁹ John Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Pt. iv, vol. ii, p. 772; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Charles I, 1645-47*, p. 599.

of London. With his sheriffs he invaded Smithfield and put to rout the "motions" and their owners. An amusing ballad⁴⁰ describing his raid is preserved:—

The Dagonizing of *Bartholomew Fayre*, caused through the Lord Major's Command for the battering downe the vanities of the Gentiles, comprehended in Flag and Pole appertayning to Puppet-Play.

The 23. of August, being the day before the Apostolicke Fayre.

On August's foure and twentieth Eve,
The Cities Sovereigne and the Shrieve
To Smithfield came (if you'l beleeve)
to see th' ungodly flagges.
The Livery men were sore put too't,
Though some wore shoe and some wore boot,
They w[e]re all constrain'd to trans on foot,
God save 'em.

Entring through Duck-lane, at the Crowne,
The soveraigne Cit began to frowne,
As if 't abated his renowne
the paint did so o'retop him.
Downe with these Dagon, then quoth he,
They outbrave my dayes Regality,—
For 's pride and partiality
Jove crop him.

Ile have no puppet-playes, quoth he;
The harmelesse-mirth displeaseth me,
Begun on August twenty-three;
'tis full twelve howres too early.
A Yonker then began to laugh,
'Gainst whom the Major advanc't white staffe,
And sent him to the Compter safe,
sans parly.

Another wight (in wofull wise)
Besought the Major, his puppetries

⁴⁰ British Museum, 669. fol. 11 (71v). Punctuation has been supplied in the foregoing reprint. The ballad has been very inaccurately (and with the silent omission of a stanza) printed in Thomas Wright's *Political Ballads Published in England During the Commonwealth*, p. 53 (Percy Society, 1841). In "A new Ballad, called a Review of the Rebellion" (669. f. 11/21), printed on June 15, 1647, occur the lines:—

"All Players, and Play-houses are o're throwne,
That now the *Two Houses* may Act alone. . . ."

Cf. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

That he would not Babell-onize,—
 surely they were not whorish.
 Oh don't my bratts Isabellize,
 They ne're did Meretrithialize
 Betwixt your Lordship's Ladies thighes;—
 peace Villaine.

Another Mortall had a clout,
 Which on a long pole did hang out,
 At which the Major turn'd up his snout,
 for he was then advancing.
 Mounted with him came both the Shrieves
 And Catchpoles with their hanging slieves;
 They shew'd much like a den of theev's,
 though prauncing.

With that my Lord did silence breake;
 He op'd his mouth and thus did speake:
 'Tis fittest, quoth he, that the weake
 unto the walls should goe.
 There was a Varlet (close at hand)
 To execute Gold chaines command,—
 Pull'd wight away straight, notwithstanding fowle 'twas.

He that shew'd wonders made of waxe
 Spoke in behalfe of his fine knacks:
 Quoth he, we spit no fire of flax,
 nor such like puppet-showes.
 Besides we shew his Excellence.
 Quoth Major, that is a faire pretence,
 Gods-nigs! 'tis time that I went hence;
 s' away h' goes.

On top of Booth sat pudding Iohn
 (Lord would be loath to sit thereon).
 I'me sure he wisht his Lordship gone,
 yet durst not tell him so.
 And when his Lordship left the Fayre,
 John set up throat did rend the Ayre,
 And glad he was, he lowd did sweare,
 he was gone.

So was Mr. *FINIS*.

In a broadsheet called "An Elegy, on The Timely Death of John Warner, Late Lord Maior," ⁴¹ published on November 17, 1648, the Bartholomew Fair raid is mentioned in

⁴¹ British Museum, 669. fol. 13(43).

His EPITAPH.

Here lies my Lord Major under this Stone,
 That last Bartholomew-fair, no Puppets would owne,
 But next Bartholomew-faire, who liveth to see,
 Shall view my Lord Mayor, a Puppet to bee.

In so little esteem was the law held by actors that the Salisbury Court company printed play-bills, which they posted in conspicuous places, announcing a performance of Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* for October 6 or, possibly, October 5. The company was perhaps made up of members of the old King's Men and Beeston's Boys⁴² who were at that time engaged in the publication of the Beaumont and Fletcher folio. In response to the advertisements, some young lords and other eminent persons, to say nothing of the common people in the pit, assembled at Salisbury Court. The impudence of the players, and probably the very name of the play, brought swift misfortune. The Lord Mayor Warner and the Sheriffs of London unexpectedly appeared, broke up the performance, and arrested Timothy Reed, the Fool. Financially, however, the players profited, for "the men and women with the boxes that took monies fled" at the first hint of danger, leaving the audience to cry out vainly for reimbursement of the price of admission.⁴³ The royalist news-books, themselves objects of stern censorship laws, comment on the raid with more or less bitterness. Strangely enough, *Mercurius Melancholicus* (October 2-9, p. 32) is lacking in sympathy. It said:

⁴² According to Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage*, p. 365. Fleay and all other historians of the drama are disturbed because Collier (*Hist. Eng. Dram. Poetry*, 1879, II, 37) gave two dates, 1644 and 1647, for this raid. The former date is merely a typographical error.

⁴³ "A Stage-Play was to have been acted in Salisbury Court this day [October 6] (and Bills stuck up about it) called *A King and no King*, formerly acted at the Black-Fryers, by his Majesties servants, about 8. yeares since, written by *Francis Beaumont*, and *Iohn Fletcher*.

"The Sheriffes of the City of *London* with their Officers went thither, and found a great number of people; some young Lords, and other eminent persons; and the men and women with the Boxes, [that took monies] fled. The Sheriffes brought away *Tim Reede* the Foole, and the people cryed

The Common Inns of sin, and Blasphemy, the *Playhouses* began to be custom'd again, and to act filthinesse and villanny to the life; but on Tuesday last [October 5] there appear'd more Actors then should be, (yet no Devills) at *Salisbury Court*, the Lord Mayjor and Sheriffe was there, who put the puppy-Players so out of countenance, that they had not one word to say; why should *Play houses* be cry'd up, and *Pamphlets* be cry'd down; are they bawdy-houses too?

But *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (October 5-12) confidently asserted that the Parliament's triumph was only temporary and that in another age its follies would be stripped and whipped:

Though the House hindred the Players this weeke from playing the old Play, *King*, and no *King*, at *Salisbury Court*, yet believe me,

He that does live, shall see another Age,
Their Follies stript and whipt upon the Stage.

The Parliament's triumph was not even temporary. The audacity of the players was no doubt responsible for the severe laws that followed. Had they been content to play secretly, observing due precautions against detection, they might have escaped anything further than an occasional raid. Openly to advertise plays was an insult too gross for the government to overlook. On October 18, further complaints were made to the Commons of the "bold Attempt of Stage-Players playing at Publick Houses in the City, contrary to Ordinance of Parliament," and this House immediately passed a severe law "for the better suppression of Stage-plays, Interludes and Common Players."⁴⁴ The *Moderate Intelligencer* (October 21-28) reported that on October 21 "The Ordinance for suppressing of Stage Plays, was concurred with by the Lords, there's an end of those Gamesters, there's Tragedies (though not Comedies) enough besides in *England* and *Ireland*."

As issued on October 22 this Ordinance⁴⁵ for the Suppressing of Stage-Plays authorized and required the Lord Mayor of London and the Justices of Peace and the Sheriffs of London, Westminster, and the Counties of Middlesex and Surrey to search all places where plays had been given, to arrest all persons who might be

out for their monies, but slunke away like a company of drowned Mice without it" (*Perfect Occurrence[s] of Every Daie iournall*, October 1-8, 1647). The brackets in the last paragraph occur in the original text.

⁴⁴ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, iv, ii, 844.

⁴⁵ Hazlitt, *English Drama and Stage*, pp. 64-65.

proved to have acted in plays, and to bring such players before the next General Sessions of the Peace "to be punished as Rogues, according to law." *Mercurius Anti-Pragmaticus* (October 28-November 4), a periodical favoring Parliament, naturally enough approved of the order:

In the meane time that the Tragick Buskin, and Comick Sock be not worn, which is enough to make the Players to act their own Tragedie: were they noble now, I would counsell them to imitate the heroick acts of those they have personated, and each help destroy his fellow, since they are not onely silenced, but branded with a name of infamie, ROGUES; but this word perhaps doth the lesse distaste them, on consideration that a famous Queen bestowed upon them the same Epithete.

But the royalist pamphlets roundly denounced both Ordinance and Parliament. Said *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (October 26-November 2):

Unlesse the *houses* take some speciall Order, *Stage-players* will never downe while the heavenly *Buffones* of the Presbyterie are in Action, all whose *Sermons* want nothing but *Sence* and *Wit*, to passe for perfect *Comedies*. And therefore seeing the *houses* condemne all *Stage-players* in an Ordinance, to be prosecuted as *common-Rogues* at the *Sessions*, I see no reason why *Rogues* should be parted.

Mercurius Elencticus (October 29-November 5) adopts a similar tone and, incidentally, shows that the Cockpit, too, had been open:

In the interim (that it may not be said they loyter in their great Worke of *Reformation*) they proceeded to a debate for the regulating of Play-houses: And for that end have thundred out an Ordinance, for the Lord Mayor, and the Justices of the Peace, to suppress Stage Playes, Interludes, and Common-Players: Wherein wee may observe how malicious men are one to another, that be of the same Profession. They of Westminster have Acted their parts now seaven yeares upon the stage of this Kingdome; inso-much that they have even tyred and wearyed out the Spectators, and are themselves ready to be hissed off the Stage, and yet they cannot endure that their Elder brethren of the *Cock-pit* should live by them; because their Actions consist of Harmelesse mirth and Loyalty, whilst themselves Act nothing but tragicall and treasonable Scenes of mischief and ruine to the whole Kingdome.

A daring printer got out a broadside called "The Cryes of Westminster. Or a Whole Pack of Parliamentary Knavery opened, and set to sale,"⁴⁶ in which one of the cries is:

⁴⁶ British Museum, 669. fol. 11 (128).

Buy a new Ordinance of the Commons, against S[t]age-players. New-lye printed, and new-lye come forth. Saints now alone must Act for Riches, The Plott out-smells old *Atkins* breches.

On January 1, 1648, the ordinance issued by Parliament on the preceding July 17 expired. Although the temper and the will of the Houses were obviously set on abolishing all plays, and although secrecy would have served a better purpose, actors at the Fortune, the Cockpit, Salisbury Court, and, presumably, the Red Bull, seized upon the expiration of the ordinance as an excuse to begin a series of public performances openly and, as it were, lawfully. For a week or two they were not molested. On January 22, however, the House of Commons was informed "that many Stage Playes were acted in the severall parts of the City, [and the] County of Middlesex, notwithstanding the Ordinance of Parliament to the contrary."⁴⁷ To make the situation more offensive, very eminent persons were among the regular patrons, and they drove to plays in their coaches, thus openly defying the Parliament. The *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer* (January 18-25) remarked that "it is very observable, that on Sunday *January* 23. there were ten Coaches to heare Doctor *Ushur* at *Lincolns* Inne, but there were above sixscore Coaches on the last Thursday in Golden lane to heare the Players at the Fortune."⁴⁸ *Mercurius Elencticus*⁴⁹ (January 19-26), a a news-book hostile to Parliament, temperately stated that where a dozen coaches "tumble after Obadiah Sedgewick," seventy wheel

⁴⁷ *Perfect Diurnall*, January 17-24, 1647/8.

⁴⁸ Noticed by S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, III, 308.

⁴⁹ "But Col. *Baxter* is not more annoyed with his Soldiers *Posteriora*: then the *Members* are perplexed with the *Play-houses*: for since *Orthodox* Preaching was laid aside, the *People* find that they can edifie much more in hearing one *play*, then twenty of their best *Sermons* . . . So that where a dozen Coaches *Tumble* after *Obadiah Sedgewick*; Threescore are observed to *wheele* to the *Cockpit*, which is very offensive to the *Brethren*, which would seem to relish nothing but the *Languag* of *Canaan*: for since there is no man but sees their unheard-of *absurdities*, they are very *Icalous* to be personated on the *stage* (for that they feare would take a deep *impression* in the mind of the most simple people) And therefore the better to *ingrosse* all *fooleries* within their own *Orbe*, they have made an Additionall Order against *Stage-Playes* in *London* and *Middlesex*, and required the *Militia* to cause the *Benches* and *Boxes* in the *Play-houses* to be pull'd up by the *Ropes*: So that now no *Stages* must be *tollerated* but that at *Westminster*: None Act *Cataline* but themselves."

to the Cockpit. These figures show clearly the problem facing the Long Parliament. The suppression of theatres was a most unpopular measure, a measure that could be enforced only by incessant vigilance and espionage. The upper classes, as well as the middle and lower classes, for the most part objected to it; and openly countenanced violations of the law. Parliament hit upon the clever expedient of punishing auditors as well as actors.

Drastic measures were voted in the House of Commons; it ordered on January 22

that an Ordinance should be drawne for suppressing all Stage Playes and taking downe of all their Boxes, Stages, and Seats in the severall houses where the said Plays are usually acted, and make it unserviceable for acting any Playes in for the future, and for making a penalty for such as shall disobey the said Ordinance: And this Ordinance to be brought in with all convenient speed.

They further ordered that the Lord Mayor and Sheriffes and justices of the peace of the City of London and the severall Militiaes of the Cities of London and Westminster and likewise of the Hamletts, should take care for the suppressing of all Stage playes for the time to come.⁵⁰

At the same time the House of Commons renewed the old ordinance of July 17, 1647, and requested the concurrence of the House of Lords in this renewal.⁵¹ Editorially, *Mercurius Anti-Pragmaticus* (January 20-27) gloated at these acts:

And that the disobedient of what rank soever may be regulated, upon information given to the House, that many Stage-Plaies were acted in the severall parts of the City and County of Middlesex, notwithstanding they were prohibited from their foppery by a former Ordinance, they ordered, that an Ordinance should be drawne up for suppressing all Stage-Plaies,

⁵⁰ *Perfect Diurnall*, January 17-24. Cf. *The Moderate Intelligencer*, January 20-27, p. 1126:

"There was great complaint of the reviving of Stage-plaies, and of many eminent persons that resorted thither, notwithstanding the Orders of the House: thereupon it was Ordered, that all the Play houses in and about the City, be, by pulling down the seates, and other utensils for that end, disabled: they will make good Churches, were not Devotion grown cold; the suppression of these Conventicles was referred to the severall Militias; and its but need, when at that great Play, where were so many Coaches, there was a great stir, how to frame a strict Oath, that might binde every way, and being at a stand, one called out, the Covenant, the Covenant, give them that."

⁵¹ *Perfect Occurrences*, January 21-28.

and for the taking downe of all their Boxes, Stages, and Seats whatsoever, that so there might be no more Plaies acted: and indeed these are no times to have publike Interludes permitted, when the hand of God lies so heavy upon us, and all the powers of hell in action against us, if those proud parroting Players cannot live, let them put their hands to worke, they are most of them a sort of superbious Ruffians given to all manner of wickednesse, and because sometimes the Asses are cloathed in Lions skins, the Dolts imagine themselves some body, walke in as great State, as *Caesar*, and demeane themselves as loftily as any of the twelve noble spirited Beasts of the wilderness; away with them and their actions on the publike Stage.

*For since we have suppress our Adjutors,
Let's part the Actors and the rude Spectators.*

The *Moderate Intelligencer* (January 20-27) thought that the theatres would "make good Churches, were not Devotion grown cold."

But *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (January 18-25), staunch as ever, scoffed at the activity of the Parliament:

But for feare all in time should be publish't upon the *house-Tops*, the Houses have new vamp't an *old Ordinance* for abolishing *Stage-Playes*; and to prevent the acting of any hereafter, the *Boxes* and *Scaffolds* in each *Play-house*, must be pull'd downe, except it be in their owne; because they have not plaid out all their parts yet, nor I neither, nor will I till they give over:

For, though in *Tragick* Plots they all combine,
Yet know the *Comick* part shall still be mine.

Mercurius Melancholicus (January 22-29) saw in the impending ordinances against plays, no less than in the laws aimed at the suppression of the press, nothing but the fears of a gang of hypocrites in Parliament that an uncensored stage and a free press would reveal their iniquities, drive the members away in disgrace, and restore the King to his throne. It said:

On *saturday* last the house acted their parts against all stage-players, commanding the boxes, stages, and seates, (except their own) to be made unserviceable for further acting; for to say the truth, *Play-houses* are worse then whipping-schools, or the houses of correction; for there they lay open truth and falshood, in their naked colours, and scourge Iniquity untill he bleeds againe; there you may read the Parliament in print, there you may see Treason courting *Tyranny*, and Faction prostituted to *Rebellion*, there you may see (as in a Myrrour) all State-juglings, cleanly conveyances, and underhand dealings pourtray'd to the life; therefore Players

and Pamphleteers, they must, they shall come down, the Parliament play-house is sufficient to lead the Kingdom a daunce without these.⁵²

The courage and persistence of these royalist pamphleteers is even more remarkable than that of the actors. One of them was Martin Parker, before the war a mere ballad-monger, but after the war began an "editor," who devoted every nerve to evading spies (in which he was not always successful) and in working for the restoration of the Stuart line.

The House of Lords was as eager to kill theatres as was the House of Commons. On January 29 their "Lordships passed an Ordinance for putting downe of Stage-Players, to punish them as *Rogues*, according to the Statute."⁵³ This they sent to the Commons on January 31 with a request for concurrence. The Lower House, however, rejected it in favor of a bill of their own making. The latter ordinance, with the concurrence of the House of Lords, was issued on February 9.⁵⁴ It is surprising to find that just while this anti-stage legislation was being debated in the Parliament a tragic-comedy was played at the Cockpit (on February 5), one of the distinguished auditors being John Evelyn.⁵⁵

The new ordinance capped the climax for severity.⁵⁶ It provided: (1) That all stage-players were *ipso facto* incorrigible rogues, liable to arrest at sight, to flogging, and to imprisonment under the statutes of Elizabeth and James I. Specifically, it directed that for a first offense in playing, actors were to be whipped publicly and

⁵² Royalists never tired of comparing the Parliament to a playhouse comedy. Francis Kirkman merely echoed these pamphleteers when, in the preface to Webster and Rowley's *Thracian Wonder* (1661), he wrote:

"We have had the private Stage for some years clouded and under a tyrannical command, though the publick Stage of *England* has produc'd many monstrous villains, some of which have deservedly made their *exit*. I believe future Ages will not credit the transactions of our late Times to be other than a *Play*, or a *Romance*: I am sure in most Romantick Plays there hath been more probability, then in our true (though sad) Stories."

⁵³ *Perfect Occurrences*, January 28-February 4, 1647/8.

⁵⁴ *Perfect Diurnall*, January 31-February 7, 1647/8; Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, iv, ii, 936.

⁵⁵ John Evelyn's *Diary*, ed. Bray, i, 246.

⁵⁶ The text of the ordinance is in Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, iv, ii, 991; Hazlitt's *English Drama and Stage*, pp. 65 ff.; Firth and Rait's *Laws and Ordinances of the Interregnum*; etc. Though dated February 9, it was printed two days later.

then required to give security never to act again; or, in default of such security, to be sent to prison; for a second offense, they were to be punished as incorrigible rogues within the meaning of the statutes. These penalties were to be inflicted on players whether they were "wanderers or no, and notwithstanding any license whatsoever from the King or any person or persons to that purpose."

(2) That the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and Justices of Peace of London, Westminster, and the Counties of Middlesex and Surrey demolish all stage-galleries, seats, and boxes in the theatres in and about London. (3) That all sums of money taken in as admission fees from spectators at plays be seized and paid to the churchwardens of the parish in which the play was given, to be applied to the relief of the parish poor. (4) That every person proved, either by his own confession or by the testimony of one witness, to have attended a play as a spectator be fined five shillings, and that the fine so collected be applied to the relief of the poor in the parish where the offender lived.

The law of February 9, temporarily at least, created consternation in the ranks of the actors. Certain persons thought that the actors and their families then in London—about a hundred persons in all—would inevitably starve. *Mercurius Elencticus* (February 9-16) bitterly commented:

On Wednesday last they [the Parliament] fortified the Old *Ordinance* for suppressing of *Stage-plays*. They have pronounced the *Players* to be *Rogues*, thinking by this Meanes to make them *Theeves*, and then theile find out an easier way to be rid of them. These poore Men were most of them initiated, and bred up in this *quality* from their *Childhood* for the service of the *King* and *Queen*, and very few of them have any other meanes of subsistence; so that they and their Families (being about 100. Persons) must inevitably starve: But this is all the *Charity* I ever heard of, that yet they afforded to the *Kings* servants, *plunder* them of what they had, and then turne them a *grazing*.

Mercurius Pragmaticus (February 8-15), with a contempt for laws born of its own successful appearances in print, jeered at the Parliament for attempting to hide its viciousness by crushing the stage that otherwise would expose it.

And to witnesse unto the world how perfectly they hate a *King*, they are resolved for the time to come, after the *Tragedy* of this, never to admit of one, so much as in *Comedy* again. And therefore on *wednesday* last the grand *Ordinance* against *Stage-plays* was hastened into the *House*; which

ordains, that all *Players* shall, for the first offence, be *committed & and* [sic] *Fined*, and for the second be *whipped*. And though this course seem too harsh against such harmlesse *recreations*; yet, as some thinke,

*The reason why Playes must be lash't downe,
For feare themselves be whipt about the Towne.*

In like vein a broadside entitled "Troy-Novant must not be Burnt"⁵⁷ (May 8, 1648), told the Parliament:

you Vote down Playes,
That we may not know the valour of those dayes.
Because your sniffing worships want⁵⁸ let see
No *Plays*, we'll now go Act the *Tragady*.

But the dismay of the players soon passed, leaving them more determined than ever to continue their performances. And in this determination they were largely successful.

On July 26 the House of Commons directed the Committee of the Militia of Westminster to proceed immediately, with whatever forces they thought fit, to demolish the stages, boxes, scaffolds, seats and forms of the London and Middlesex playhouses, and directed Major-General Skippon to advise the Committee and "to assist them with Horse, if Need be."⁵⁹ Presumably these orders were carried out, but the actors went merrily on with their plays. By September 1 it was necessary for Parliament to take further steps. On that day the Commons appointed a Committee charged with the execution of the laws against stage-plays. Bitter complaints of the pertinacity of the players were made: the House of Commons was informed "that Stage-plays were daily acted, either at the *Bull* or *Fortune*, or the private House at *Salisbury-Court*."⁶⁰ "Then Complaint was made that *Stage-playes* were stil *Acted*," commented *Mercurius Elencticus* (September 13-20). "Why should they not? May none *Play* the *Fool* but themselves?" No less bitter was the feeling against "scandalous Books and Ballads [which were] daily published," in spite of drastic and long-continued censorship laws.⁶¹ In August Gilbert Mabbott, Licenser of the Press, unable

⁵⁷ British Museum, 669 fol. 12 (21). Further comments are given in *Perfect Occurrences*, February 11-18, and *Perfect Diurnall*, February 7-14.

⁵⁸ *I. e.*, won't.

⁵⁹ *Journals of the House of Commons*, v, 648.

⁶⁰ *Perfect Occurrences*, September 1-8, p. 434.

⁶¹ *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, September 12-19.

to cope with the flood of unlicensed books and ballads, had suggested that special police under a special provost-marshal be appointed.⁶² Mabbott himself declined the office so created; and on September 13 Francis Bethen was designated provost-marshal, furnished with twenty-one assistants, and empowered within twenty miles of London to seize all persons connected with the production, publication and distribution of scandalous books and ballads and all stage-players. Bethen was to be paid five shillings a day, his deputy three shillings fourpence, and his twenty men eighteen pence each.⁶³

But he'll never succeed, said a news-book with the misleading title of *The Parliament Porter* (September 18-25):

[My language will] perhaps hasten Capt. *Bethen* the Commander of twenty rogues (such as were never condemned to the Galleis or or [*sic*] the Gallowes) to the performance of his odious task, *viz.* the seizing upon all honest books and ballads which speak plain English to the people . . . ; the suppressing of Stage-playes, honest and harmlesse recreations, as that renowned *Q. Elizabeth* stiled them, (I speak not in the justification of that prophane vile Commedy, called the *Puritans of Amsterdam*, or any of that kind) knowing that the people of themselves are too apt to scoffe at the profession of godlinesse, but I say that it is the lustre and glory of our Nation to have vertue extolled and vice deprodated even upon the publike Theater, for to no other end an illaborate Comedy or Tragedy ought to be written or presented to the view of the vulgar, and I wish it may be the care both of present & future Actors to condemn to silence all obseane or irreligious plays, so shall the Commick Sock and Tragick Buskin be an adornment, & not a badge of contempt, as their ignorant enemies maliciously divulge.

But if *Bethen* go on his imployment, what a wretch will he remain upon record?

Mercurius Pragmaticus (September 12-19) refused to be impressed by this appointment of "a certain *Provost Marshall*, to run the round of their Jurisdiction (as the *Devill* doth) compassing the *Cittie* to and fro, . . . to prevent all *Stage-Plaies*, that no *Tragedies* may be acted but their own, and suppresses all honest *Books* and *Ballads*, lest the sinnes of such as pretend to have no sin, should be *stript* before the People, and spoyle the glory of their *Saintships*." Meanwhile, as if in irony, *Perfect Occurrences*⁶⁴

⁶² J. B. Williams, *History of English Journalism*, pp. 99-100.

⁶³ *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, September 12-19, 1648, p. 1083.

⁶⁴ December 8-15 and December 27, 1648.

brought the news that the imprisoned King at Windsor Castle "is most delighted with *Ben Johnson's* playes, of any bookes that are here" and that "the King is pretty merry, and spends much time in reading . . . *Shakspeare* and *Ben: Johnsons* Playes."

The twenty-two spies were not able immediately to carry out with complete success any part of their task: probably most of their time was devoted to searching for the authors, printers, and vendors of loyalist pamphlets, which because of the venom of their language were without question far more objectionable to Parliament than either plays or ballads. For a time there was little or no diminution in the performances at theatres. In the *Historia Histrionica* James Wright says that "when the Wars were over, and the Royalists totally Subdued; most of 'em [the actors] who were left alive gather'd up to *London*, and for a Subsistence endeavour'd to revive their Old Trade, privately." In the winter of 1648—though the occupation of London by the army should have increased the difficulties of stage-playing—"they ventured to Act some Plays with as much caution and privacy as cou'd be, at the *Cockpit*. They continu'd undisturbed for three or four Days; but at last as they were presenting the Tragedy of the *Bloudy Brother*, (in which *Lowin* Acted *Aubrey*, *Tayler* *Rollo*, *Pollard* the *Cook*, *Burt* *Latorch*, and I think *Hart Otto*) a Party of Foot Souldiers beset the House, surprized 'em about the middle of the Play, and carried 'em away in their habits, not admitting them to Shift, to *Hatton-house* then a Prison, where having detain'd them sometime, they Plunder'd them of their Cloths and let 'em loose againe."

It appears that captured actors were, in spite of the severity of the laws, treated with comparative leniency and were almost invariably released from prison after no long delay. Nothing but prolonged imprisonment could have kept players from attempting stage-performances, but—as in the case of the pamphleteers who, though continually being arrested and imprisoned, nearly always managed to escape—prisons do not seem to have had great terrors for them. Wright says further that "they used to Act privately, three or four Miles, or more, out of Town, now here, now there, sometimes in Noblemens Houses, in particular *Holland-house* at *Kensington*, where the Nobility and Gentry who met (but in no great Numbers) used to make a Sum for them, each giving a broad Peice, or the like. And *Alexander Goffe*, the Woman Actor at

Blackfriars, (who had made himself known to Persons of Quality) used to be the Jackal and give notice of Time and Place. At Christmass, and Bartlemew-fair, they used to Bribe the Officer who Commanded the Guard at *Whitehall*, and were thereupon connived at to Act for a few Days, at the *Red Bull*; but were sometimes notwithstanding Disturb'd by Soldiers."⁶⁵ It seems reasonable to suppose that bribery played a large part in the success with which the Red Bull held open its doors throughout the Commonwealth period. The occasional raids which it suffered may often have been a sort of blackmail.

Some of the older actors "pickt up a little Money by publishing the Copies of Plays never before Printed, but kept up in Manuscript," as the Beaumont and Fletcher folio edited by John Lowin and Joseph Taylor, "wherein they modestly intimate their Wants. And that with sufficient Cause; for whatever they were before the Wars, they were, after, reduced to a necessitous Condition." Other persons, like the intrepid poet-newslinger Samuel Sheppard, did not waste time in lamenting the eclipse of the playhouses where the wit of Jonson and Fletcher had reigned,—

Which once a Hackney Coach convey'd you to,
Where you sate scorning all the raine could doe,—

but instead wrote and boldly signed abbreviated plays attacking Parliament, such as *The Committee-Man Curried. A Comedy presented to the view of all Men. Written by S. Sheppard* and *The Second Part of the Committee-Man Curried* (printed July 16 and August 14, 1647). These particular plays are quartos of thirteen and twelve pages respectively, are divided into five acts, and include among the *dramatis personae* Suck-dry, a Committee-man; Common-curse, an Excise-man; Loyalty, a Cavalier; and Rebellion, a Roundhead. The prologue to the first play bitterly denounces the Parliament for suppressing plays and making it so that "Fooles onely speake *Cum privilegio*." In another satirical play—*Women Will Have their Will: Or, Give Christmas his Due* (December 12,

⁶⁵ Fleay (*Chronicle History of the London Stage*, p. 354) says that the King's players were seized on December 20, 1648, while playing *Rollo* (or *The Bloody Brother*) at the Cockpit. I have no date for this raid, which Fleay himself obviously took from Wright's *Historia Histrionica*. Notice of a raid on December 20, 1649, is given below.

1648)—Mrs. Custom asks Mrs. New-Come: "You say that the Parliament hath power to pull down *Christmas*; I pray then what will they put up in the roome on't, Stage-Playes, Dancing upon the Ropes, & *Hocus Pocus*?" *A Key to the Cabinet of the Parliament* (1648), however, ironically declares: "We need not any more stage-plays: we thank [the Puritans] for suppressing them: they save us money; for I'll undertake we can laugh as heartily at Foxley, Peters, and others of their godly ministers, as ever we did at Cane at the Red Bull, Tom Pollard in the *Humourous Lieutenant*, Robins in the *Changling*, or any humorist of them all."⁶⁶

On January 1—the day on which Parliament passed the order for the trial of Charles I—soldiers broke up performances at the Cockpit and Salisbury Court, and carried away the actors in their stage-costumes as prisoners to Whitehall. Of the actor who played the rôle of a king we are told that the soldiers "tooke the Crown off his head; yet sometimes put it on againe"—an act of ominous prophecy. Among the audiences at the two playhouses were many ladies and some of the exempted members of Parliament. The former were greatly frightened by the raid, but, as customarily, the soldiers conducted themselves civilly to all but the actors. Apparently no fines were collected from the audience.⁶⁷ Two days later, "the Players taken by the Army were ordered to put in Bail to appear before the Lord Major to answer their Actions according to Law."⁶⁸ Of their punishment I find no record, but it can hardly have been more than a flogging or a brief imprisonment.

The two raids had an amusing sequel. They were immediately followed by a clever pamphlet called *Mr William Prynne His De-*

⁶⁶ Quoted from Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, 1879, II, 38.

⁶⁷ "The souldiers of the Army, in prosecution of an Ordinance of Parliament, secured all the Players in Salisbury court and Drury lane, and brought them away prisoners in the midst of their Acts in their Robes as then habited" (*Perfect Diurnall*, January 1-8, 1649; quoted also in Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, IV, ii, 1381, and in Whitelock's *Memorials*).

"The Souldiers this day surprised the Players in Salisbury Court and Drury lane, and brought them prisoners to Whitehall, in their attire, Fools in theirs, and the King in theirs, but tooke the Crown off his head; yet sometimes put it on againe. The Ladies were in a great fear, but had no hurt: Some of the exempted Members of Parliament were there" (*Perfect Occurrences*, December 29-January 5, p. 784).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 787.

*fence of Stage-Plays, Or A Retraction of a former Book of his called Histrio-mastix.*⁶⁹ The anonymous author imitated Prynne's style very well indeed, and may for a moment have led his readers to believe that Prynne was actually recanting. The *Defence* protests vigorously against the army which "did lately [*i. e.*, on January 1] in a most inhumane, cruell, rough, and barbarous manner take away the poor Players from their Houses [the Cockpit and Salisbury Court], being met there to discharge the duty of their callings." "That honest Playes may be tolerated, and not to be forbidden by any Army under heaven," it asserts, "I do maintain before all the world . . . this wicked and tyrannical Army ought not to hinder, to impede, let, prohibit, or forbid the acting of them; which I dare maintain to all the world; for I was never afrayd to suffer in a good cause." The outraged author of *Histrio-mastix* replied on January 10, 1649, with a sheet called "The Vindication of William Prynne, Esquire,"⁷⁰ disowning the *Defence*, and describing it as "a scandalous Paper" written "by some imprisoned Stage-Players, or agents of the army."

Meanwhile, Captain Bethen and his assistants had entered vigorously upon their duties. With the news-pamphlets, which actually increased in number after his appointment,⁷¹ Bethen was for a time unsuccessful; but ballad-singing was crushed completely, ballad-printing greatly decreased, and the chief offending playhouses were, as the law had directed, partially wrecked. The seats, boxes, galleries, and stages of the Cockpit, Salisbury Court, and the Fortune were demolished in March, 1649. A contemporary observer states that "the play house in Salsbury Court, in fleetstreete, was pulled downe by a company of Souldiers, set on by the Sectuaries of these sad times, On Saturday the 24 day of March. 1649. The Phenix [or Cockpit] in Druery Lane, was pulled downe also this day . . . by the same Souldiers"; and that the Fortune was "now pulled downe on the in-side by the Souldiers this 1649."⁷² This is the first known application of the ordinance of February 9, 1648, and of the subsequent order issued by the House of Commons on

⁶⁹ Hazlitt, *English Drama and Stage*, pp. 266 ff.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 271.

⁷¹ J. B. Williams, *History of English Journalism*, p. 111.

⁷² *London Academy*, XXII, 315; Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, pp. 380 f.

July 17, 1648, directing the pulling-down of boxes, stages, and galleries. Bethen's act must have added greatly to the difficulties of the players.

The Fortune, indeed, so far as stage-performances are concerned, came to an end at this time. It had passed into the ownership of Dulwich College at Edward Alleyn's death in 1626; but in the years following the anti-stage laws the lessees, unable to give plays, had refused to pay rent. Lisle, who had leased the theatre for £120 yearly, in 1649 tried to secure permission to "conuert the said playhouse to some other vse, whereby he might raise the Rent due for the same"; but the College refused, demanding that the rent still be paid "in the nature of a Playhouse."⁷³ Shortly afterward, the College took formal possession of the house, the rent then being in arrears of more than £974. In 1650 the poor of the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields petitioned that the old playhouse be turned over to them as a place of worship, but were refused. The Fortune was razed to the ground in 1662.⁷⁴

Two new civil provost-marshals were appointed by Parliament on June 6, 1649. They were to serve for one year at a salary of £100 each, to have twelve regular assistants at one shilling per day, and to be given other assistants if required.⁷⁵ Very severe ordinances against printing followed, so that at the end of the year 1649 only two royalist periodicals were in existence; two others appeared early in 1650; but by June, 1650, all the royalist papers had been exterminated.⁷⁶ Unlicensed printing was not, however, totally crushed. Of its success in attaining this end the Parliament could hardly have boasted; for all its efforts ended in miserable failure. Of the enormous number of unlicensed single sheets and pamphlets that evaded the searchers, a goodly share took the form of playlets which outrageously abused the leaders of the army and Parliament and loyally spoke for Charles II.

To see how much Cromwell and his associates were asked to forgive and countenance, consider the conclusion to the *Cuckows Nest at Westminster*⁷⁷ (1648). There Queen Fairfax cries out:

⁷³ *Notes and Queries*, 10th Series, I, 85.

⁷⁴ Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, pp. 290 f.

⁷⁵ *Perfect Occurrences*, May 25-June 1, 1649; *Man in the Moon*, June 5-13, 1649.

⁷⁶ J. B. Williams, *History of English Journalism*, pp. 120, 127, 129, 133.

⁷⁷ *Harleian Miscellany*, V, 550.

Thou a Queen, thou a Queen? Udsfoot, Minion, hold your Clack from Prating Treason against me, or I will make Mrs. *Parliament* lay her Ten Commandments upon thee? Thou a Queen, a Brewer's Wife a Queen? That Kingdom must needs be full of Drunkards, when the King is a Brewer? My *Tom* is nobly descended, and no base Mechanick.

To which Mrs. Cromwell retorts in kind:

Mechanick? Mechanick in thy Face; thou art a Whore to call me Mechanick; I am no more a Mechanick than thyself; Marry come up, Mother *Damnable*, *Joan Ugly*; must you be Queen? Yes, you shall; Queen of *Puddledock*, or *Billingsgate*, that is fittest for thee; My *Noll* has won the Kingdom, and he shall wear it, in despite of such a Trollop as thou art.

Then "Enter a Servant running," who announces the death of Cromwell and Fairfax, the imminent restoration of Charles I, and the two women fly in fear. Similar in tone and plot is an eight-page *Tragi-Comedy* called *New-Market-Fayre, Or A Parliament Out-Cry* (June 15, 1649),—a coarse, but really amusing, attack on Cromwell, Fairfax, and other prominent members of the government, all of whom at the end of the play hear of Charles II's triumphs and commit suicide. *The Second Part of the Tragi-Comedy, Called New-Market-Fayre. Or Mrs. Parliaments New Figaries. Written by the Man in the Moon* consists of only twenty pages, but boasts of five acts and ten scenes. The prologue declares with truth that it

cannot chuse but make proud *rebels* rage,
To see themselves thus acted on the Stage.

The actors here are two loyalists, Fairfax, Cromwell ("Possessed with Devils"); Ireton, Hewson, and Pride ("Three Traytours"); Lady Fairfax and Mrs. Cromwell, with their Maids of Honor, Ruth Incontinence and Abigail Concupiscence; and others. The play ends with a revolt of the people, who drive out these traitors and cry, "Let's Petition our King home."⁷⁸ Perhaps some of these

⁷⁸ Of like nature is *A Bartholomew Fairing* (August 30, 1649), a twenty-eight-page play, in which occurs the remark (p. 7):

Bishops and *Plays* were in a day put down,
I well remember; and *Bull baytings* allow'd:
These are no wanton sports.

James Howell, in his *A Perfect Description of the People . . . of Scotland* (June 14, 1649, p. 7), remarks: "They hold their Noses, if you talk of Bear-baiting, and stop their Ears, if you speak of a Play."

brief plays were performed (what better could the noblemen who hired actors at their private homes want?). In any case, it is no wonder that every effort was made to crush a press that indulged in libels like these and a theatre which countenanced them. One sympathizes with the Parliament's anger, but admires the Royalists' pluck.

A further disaster to the players is recorded on December 20, when a group of them who were playing "near St. John's Street" (evidently at the Red Bull) were informed on, with the result that soldiers arrested them, confiscated their swords and costumes, and carried them to prison.⁷⁹

Naturally enough, no news-books mentioned the performances that were given in London without molestation. But from the large number of raids that are reported during the next few years it is evident that at the Red Bull and Salisbury Court—to say nothing of private houses—plays were given with tolerable frequency. The policy of complete suppression never succeeded, though acting was always attended with danger of arrest, flogging, and imprisonment. Parliament, however, was inflexible in its attitude toward the stage. One of the most interesting documents yet discovered⁸⁰ is the petition of Cockpit and Blackfriars players, dating about 1650, praying Parliament to allow them liberty to act and offering to produce no play without first submitting it to official censors.

To the Supream Authoritie the Parliament of the Common-wealthe of England The humble Petition of diverse poor and distressed men, heretofore the Actors of Black-Friers and the Cock-Pit. Sheweth,

That your most poor Petitioners, having long suffered in extream want, by being prohibited the use of their qualitie of Acting, in which they were trained up from their childhood, whereby they are incapable of any other way to get a subsistance, and are now fallen into such lamentable povertie, that they know not how to provide food for themselves, their wives and children: great debts being withall demanded of them, and they not in a condition to satisfie the creditours; and without your mercifull and present permission, they must all inevitably perish.

⁷⁹ "There being some Aotors privatly playing neer St. Johns street, whereof one giving information to some Soldiers, some Troopers went from the Mewes seized upon the Players, and took away their Sword and Cloths" (*A Perfect Diurnall*, December 17-24, 1649, p. 18). Mentioned also in Whitelocke's *Memorials of the English Affairs*, 1732, p. 435.

⁸⁰ By Professor C. H. Firth, who printed it in *Notes and Queries*, 8th Series, V, 464, and thinks the date is probably 1650.

May it therefore please this Honourable House to commiserate their sad and distressed condition, and to vouchsafe them a Libertie to Act but some small time (for their triall of inoffensiveness) onely such morall and harmless representations, as shall no way be distastfull to the Commonwealth or good manners. They humbly submitting themselves to any one of knowing judgement and fidelitie to the State, appointed to oversee them and their actions, and willing to contribute out of their poor endeavours, what shall be thought fit and allotted them to pay weekly or otherwise, for the service of Ireland, or as the State shall think fitting.

And as in dutie they are ever bound, shall pray, &c.

But the petition brought no favorable response, and illegal performances were perforce continued. The chance of flogging and imprisonment taken by the actors and of fines by the audience added a bit of spice that appealed to everybody.

On January 21, 1650, a play at the Red Bull was broken up; the lords, gentlemen, ladies, and gentlewomen who made up the audience were forced to give their names so that fines or other punishment could be properly determined on; and Andrew Cane and six or seven other players were carried off to prison. Two or three companies of soldiers are said to have participated in this raid, and with the players' robes impaled on their pikes marched away in their pride. The comments of two royalist news-books on this episode are too droll to omit. *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (*For King Charls II*)⁸¹ says:

If you be destitute of something to do, you [Parliament] may go hang your selves for a pastime to the people; I believe you would have more spectators then the *Players* in *St. John's street*; yes and Lords and Ladies too would laugh more to see the *Juncto* and State hang, then any Play in the world Acted.

But your own Play-houses at *Westminster*, *Whitehall*, *Darby-house*, *Somerset-house*, &c. are the only Stages where Players must come, and who those players must be, I'le tell you; all in Parliament Robes K—s F—s⁸² and Rebels; those are the men now in request: *Andr. Cane* is out of date & all other his complices: alas poor players they are acting their parts in prison, for their presumptions to break a Parliament Crack. On Tuesday *Janu. 21. 1649.* bee it known unto all men, the State *Janizaries* rob'd the Play-house in *St Johns streete*, imprisoned the Players, and listed all the Lords, Ladies and Gentlewomen, who are either to serve the States or pay money, if their mightynesse please to command it for so

⁸¹ January 22-29, 1649/50, Part 2, No. 39. There is a further account of this raid in *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, January 18-25, p. 227.

⁸² *Sic* in the original. Perhaps "Knaves, Fools."

great a contempt as breaking an Act made upon the Stage at *Westminster*.

Me thinks the Supreme Poppet-players of State should have something else in their minds then suppressing Playes.

The Man in the Moon (January 23-31)⁸³ tells the story amusingly and at considerable length:

Sure the *Play* at *Westminster* is almost at an end, for the *Foole* hath done his *part*, and is fetch'd off the *Stage* with a *vengeance*; Exit *Philip* the *Foole*, but a knavish one Ile promise you; which made the *Tragedians* at *Westminster-Hall* presently so mad for him; that they thought, the hideous *Storm* that fetch'd him away, had carried him to those other *Comedians* in *Saint Johns* street: which drove them presently thither, with two or three *Companies* of the *Rebells*; seized on the poore *Players*, uncased them of their Cloaths, disarmed the Lords and Gentlemen of their Swords and Cloakes; but finding him not to be there, they hung the poore *Players* Cloathes upon their Pikes, and very manfully marched away with them as *Trophies* of so wonderfull a *victory*: there was taken at this Fight about seven or eight of the chiefe Actors, some wounded, all their Cloaths and Properties, without the losse of one man on our side; onely at their returne with their *spoiles* and *prisoners*, one of our Souldiers being left behind by reason of some plunder, was taken up with the sight of a *Riding* at *Smithfield-Barres*: where, one that acted *Sir Thomas* [*Fairfax*!] a horse-back, with a *Ladle* in his hand, two Baskets of *Prides* Graines before him, and his *Doxie* riding with her face to the horse tayle behind; one of them flung a *Ladle* of Graines in our Commanders face: which he took to be a great affront to a Souldier that had so lately routed the *Players*, that he furiously drew his Sword (he had stole from the Play-house) and began to sweare and vapour: which a Butchers Boy perceiving, presently disarm'd him, made him swallow his Graines and be thankfull, and after some certain *Kicks* of *Indignation*, broke his sword over his Coxcombe, and sent him to *Pauls* to complaine to his Fellowes: and if this Souldier scape (as the Surgeon is something doubtfull) there will questionlesse come forth an *Act* for a *Thanksgiving* for this wonderfull Victory over the poore *Players*, and the Souldiers deliverance.

I have found no other reference to mobs that took the part of the actors against the soldiery. Almost a year after this riot (November 13, 1650) Charles Cutts, a barber of St. Martin's parish, was arrested "redy drest in cloths and goeing to act a stage-playe as hee confesseth himself." For this violation of the law recogni-

⁸³ No. 40, pp. 313-314. The "fool" referred to was Philip, Earl of Pembroke. There is a very scurrilous ballad on his death in one of Thomason's pamphlets, *The Rebells Warning Piece* (E. 593/13).

zances of £40 from Cutts and of £20 from each of two other persons were exacted for the player's appearance at the next General Sessions of Westminster.⁸⁴

The repertory of the actors was made up almost wholly of old plays, unless an occasional brief satirical comedy like those already mentioned was included, and of excerpts from them, or "drolls." Literary men, then, deeply resented the restrictions on plays that limited their own work. Of William Cartwright's *Comedies*, printed in 1651, Joseph Howe said, in laudatory verses prefixed to the book, that they would have made "Play-seeing th' only *London Trade*"

Had this Scene-Wit not met an Age
That frowneth down the mourning Stage,
That all Dramatick Lawes confutes,
And maketh All the Actors Mutes.

Robert Bacon, in his *Poems* (1650),⁸⁵ addressed lines "To my Honour'd Friend Benjamin Garfield" that summed up the position of the literati. Plays, he said, are still being written, but the mere writing is not enough: plays are made not to be read but to be acted.

I wish the Actors may
As well as thou hast written, make the Play.
Playes written are not finished, made they are
I' th' study first, next on the Theater.

Many plays, indeed, were written and published during the interregnum. Davenant's *Unfortunate Lovers* was printed in 1643, his *Love and Honour* in 1649; Quarles's *Virgin Widow* appeared in 1649; Shirley's *Triumph of Beauty* in 1646, to be followed by six previously unpublished plays in 1653 and still others in 1655 and 1659. The Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647, various editions of Richard Brome's plays in 1653, Killigrew's *Conspiracy* (1653), and Sir Aston Cokayne's plays in 1659 may also be mentioned. A number of these printed plays were advertised in newspapers, like *Several Proceedings of State Affairs*, that were published under the authority of Parliament itself,—a fact that seems somewhat inconsistent with that body's ardent hostility

⁸⁴ *Middlesex County Records*, ed. J. C. Jeaffreson, III, 198.

⁸⁵ Page 114.

toward the stage.⁸⁶ The same pamphlets, too, often carried reports of plays given among the exiled Royalists, though usually in a hostile tone. *Mercurius Politicus*, for example, on February 1-8, 1655, printed the following report:

From Brussels, Feb. 8. stilo novo.

We are here taken up with Plays, Balls, Feasts, and businesses of that nature, to divert the Queen of *Sweden* withal. But in the mean time that they are busie here in spending their time with Plays and such kind of fopperies, the *French* are acting their tragedy in the field to the prejudice of the *Spaniards*.

Private performances of plays were, it is evident, not at all uncommon. Thus Abraham Cowley's *Guardian*, printed in 1650 and revised after the Restoration as *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, was, so Cowley himself states, several times privately acted during the interregnum; and the gentlemen of the Inner Temple performed a masque privately in November, 1651.⁸⁷

By complaints of the literary men, by burlesque plays published in pamphlet form, by sarcastic passages in news-books, by ballads, and by private or surreptitious performances, the theatre was kept prominently in the thoughts of London people, who had lost none of their old love for drama. Players themselves were still so common as to be regarded fit subjects for puritanical tirades against vanity, pride in apparel, and hypocrisy. "What new-found creatures have we walking in our streets now a-dayes with *Peacocks-tayles* before their Codpeecees, Ribbon'd, and braided, as if the *Players* (being forbidden the Stage) should now act *Comoedies* in the streets?" asked one.⁸⁸ *The Laughing Mercury* (September 8-16, 1652) devoted some space to a consideration of whether acting makes a man insincere:

There was lately a great Dispute between some *Actors* of *Tragedies* and other new-sprung *Sects*, which were the greatest *Impostors*? The *Players* alledged, That the disguise of the *minde* was far worse then that of the *body*; and that they did really seem to be *Actors*, and when their *Vizards* and brave *Apparrell* was taken off; they would appear to be at best but

⁸⁶ E. g., *Perfect Diurnall*, May 9-16, 1652, and May 16-23, 1653; *Several Proceedings*, June 16-23, 1653.

⁸⁷ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate*, II, 11-12.

⁸⁸ *Mercurius Heraclitus*, July 5-12, 1652, p. 22.

hyred to Act their Parts for a little silver; but such *Sects* wearing their *disguises* inwardly, cannot (as the *Players*) put them off and on at Pleasure; Besides the *Players* Act in jeast, but the *Hypocrite* in earnest; yet both for lucre of *gain*.

That one actor was far from being impoverished by the laws suppressing his profession seems to be suggested by an item in the satirical list of important events given in Ralph Desmus's almanac, *Merlinus Anonymus* (November 18, 1653): "Thomson the player died of the govv't, 1652."⁸⁹

Most of the records reproduced in this paper deal with the London stage, but no satisfactory history of the Commonwealth drama can be written until some one has made a thorough study of the enforcement of the laws against actors in the provinces. That in many English provincial towns stage-players were treated with great severity, under the old laws against rogues and vagabonds, is evident even from the few instances I have found. For example, in Yorkshire, on January 20, 1652, "four men, apprehended at Well acting an Interlude, [were ordered] to be carried to Well and there whipt till their bodies be bloody, for rogues, and the Constable, with the Minister and other sufficient men of the town, to see this done, and the men to have passes given them to Richmond, the place of their abode." At Kirbymoore, Yorkshire, on January 9, 1654, "two Keabecke men" and "two Sutton men and a Kilvington man" were imprisoned for playing "interludes." At the Quarter Sessions at Richmond on January 12, 1656, eight men were ordered whipped, "being, on their own confession, convict for being common Players of Interludes, and rogues by the Statute"; while proceedings were ordered to be instituted against all constables who had failed to arrest "any common Players of Interludes." In January, 1657, two players were "stript from the middle upwards and whipt, in the markt place of Hemsley."⁹⁰

Equally remarkable is the following account,⁹¹ published in the *Public Intelligencer* for January 14-21, 1656, of how Newcastle Justices punished players:

A Letter from New Castile upon Tine, Jan. 10 [1656].

I here send you a piece of Exemplary Justice, which as it sets a copy to

⁸⁹ British Museum, E. 1487 (1), sig. B8v.

⁹⁰ *North Riding Records*, V, 101, 173, 209, 260. Cf. also, p. 212.

⁹¹ Noted also by C. H. Firth in *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, VI, 123.

other Majestrates of this Nation, so also cannot be unfitly thought communicable to you. On the 28. of *December*, a cluster of lewd fellows, adventuring to act a Comedy within the Precincts and bounds of this Town; daring, as it were authority, and outfacing Justice; our vigilant Magistrates hearing of it, resolved to set a boundary to their sinful courses, and clip the harvest of their hopes; concluding such enormities, the proper nurseries of impiety; and therefore they repair to the place, where having begun, *Alderman Robert Johnson*, Mr. Sheriff, and divers godly men step in to see their sport, but their sudden approach often changed the scene, both of their play and countenances, so that the interlude proving ominous, boded no less than a Tragedy to the Actors; turning the play into a Tragi-comedy; after they had done they were apprehended, and examined before the Mayor, and other Justices of the Peace, and found guilty of being common players of Interludes, according to a statute made in the reign of *Queen Elizabeth*, and according to Law, adjudged to be whipt; which accordingly was performed on the publick Market place, where a great confluence of people thronged to see them act the last part of their play, their robes of honour hanging in publick view.

Therefore let the Nation know their names, and habitations, that all that have converse with them may look upon them to be such as the law of the Land hath concluded them to be, Rogues and Vagabonds, as followeth:

John Blaiklock of Jesmond,
John Blaiklock of Jesmond his son, both Papists.
James Moorhead of Newcastle,
Edward Liddel of Jesmond, a Papist,
James Edwards of Usebourn.
Thomas Rawkstraw of Newcastle.
Richard Byerly of Usebourn.

All whipt in Newcastle for Rogues and Vagabonds.

To return to London! On May 25, 1652, William Beeston—formerly Governor of the Boys at the Cockpit—bought the Salisbury Court playhouse from John Herne for £408.⁹² Henceforth it had no part that can be traced in the history of the Commonwealth drama. Actors still gave an occasional performance at the Cockpit in Drury Lane but concentrated—when not playing outside the City or in private houses—more and more on the Red Bull, a playhouse that was never closed for a long period during the entire interregnum. In the weekly news-pamphlets published by John Crouch, a printer with royalist sympathies, advertisements of proposed performances, usually at the Red Bull, are frequently inserted.⁹³ Per-

⁹² Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 381.

⁹³ Even after the Restoration *Mercurius Democritus* continued these advertisements; e. g., in its issue for May 22, 1661, p. 7 (Burney 56A).

haps Crouch thought that, except to the initiated eye, his announcements would be lost, or classed as jokes, among the filth, scurrility, or nonsense that made up the bulk of his *Laughing Mercury*, *Mercurius Democritus*, and *Mercurius Fumigosus*. Such might well have been true of this notice of a droll in *Democritus* on March 23-30, 1653:

There is a Welsh Hobby-Horse that is to sing *Ballads* in *Smithfield Round* to the Tune of *Topsy-tur-vy*, all that are delighted with such *Mad-rigalls*, may come and return with safety.

The phrase "may come and return with safety" Crouch often inserted as a special inducement to attract a crowd; but his predictions were not always, as we shall see, fulfilled.

In its issue for December 16-22, 1652, *Mercurius Democritus* advertised that

There is to be seen at the red Bull in St. Johns street on Thursday next the Rare Dancing on the *Ropes*, with excellent new Country Dances, never seen before, with running up a board with Rapiers. To be performed by *Nicholas Spencer* and *Christopher W[h]itehead*, with a merry conceited Fellow called Mr. *John Capon*.

The three actors here advertised appeared regularly at the Red Bull. *Mercurius Fumigosus*, in a passage later to be quoted, describes Christopher Whitehead as one of the finest of English comedians. Nicholas Spencer survived the Restoration, and then found himself prevented by Davenant "from exercising his quality by threats and Arrests, and by paying of five and Twenty shillings in money," whereupon he became a party to Sir Henry Herbert's suit against Davenant.⁹⁴ If John Capon was, as undoubtedly *Fumigosus* declares, a real actor and not an assumed name, then he was a very bold fellow openly to announce his performances. One of the most remarkable playlets of the period is that called *The Disease of the House: Or, the State Mountebanck: Administring Physick To a Sick Parliament. With the Merry Conceits of John Capon, his Antidotes Playsters and Salves to cure Rebellion. Printed for the Health, of the Common-wealth, 1649*. In this play (dated by George Thomason August 21) John Capon is one of the two characters, and is represented as speaking both the prologue and the

⁹⁴ Halliwell-Phillipps, *A Collection of Ancient Documents Respecting the Office of Master of the Revels*, p. 88.

epilogue.⁹⁵ After so vicious an attack on Parliament as he gave here, it is difficult to understand how he could have acted publicly.

The government, however, was gradually adopting a more lenient policy toward rope-dancing and drolls,—winking at them, but reserving the right to swoop without warning upon the performances and to imprison the actors and fine the spectators. “Droll-Humours,” “Humours,” or “Rump Drolls” are the names applied by Civil War writers to the brief original farces in prose or verse and the farcical scenes cut from well-known Elizabethan plays, now generally known by the single term of “drolls.” Several collections of these works were published, the last by Francis Kirkman in 1672-3 under the title of *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport*, which is described as containing drolls as they were acted “in Publique and Private, in London at Bartholomew. In the Countrey at other Faïres. In Halls and Taverns. On several Mountebancks Stages, at Charing-Cross, Lincolns-Inn-Fields, and other places. By Several Stroleing Players, Fools, and Fiddlers, And the Mountebancks Zanies. With loud Laughter, and great Applause.” *The Wits* has a preface by Kirkman which is the *locus classicus* for our knowledge of drolls:

When the publique Theatres were shut up . . . then all that we could divert ourselves with were these humours and pieces of Plays, which passing under the Name of a merry conceited Fellow, called *Bottom the Weaver*, *Simpleton the Smith*, *John Swabber*, or some such title, were only allowed us, and that but by stealth too, and under pretence of Rope-dancing, or the like; and these being all that was permitted us, great was the confluence of the Auditors; and these small things were as profitable, and as great get-pennies to the Actors as any of our late famed Plays. I have seen the Red Bull Play-House, which was a large one, so full, that as many went back for want of room as had entred; and as meanly as you may think of these Drolls, they were then Acted by the best Comedians then and now in being; and I may say, by some that then exceeded all now living, by Name, the incomparable *Robert Cox*, who was not only the principal Actor, but also the Contriver and Author of most of these Farces.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Cf. also this passage in *Mercurius Anti-Britannicus; Or, Part of the King's Cabinet Vindicated from the Aspersions of an Impotent Libeller* (August 11), 1645: “Iust like Mountebanks and Iuglers, where the Master Iugler first Cosens the People, and cast[s] a mist before their eyes; then *his Zany* or *Iohn Capon*, does the same Tricks over againe in a ridiculous way. You may call the former Observations the Interlude, or Play; this Fellow's descendant the Iigge, which shuts up the scene with mirth.”

⁹⁶ As the original edition is not now accessible I quote from J. W. Elsworth's *Westminster Drolleries*, p. xix.

Kirkman undoubtedly meant that Cox was "the contriver or author": he had no intention of claiming for Cox the authorship, say, of the Shakespearean drolls. As early as 1646 Cox had "contrived" a droll called *The Merry Conceits of Bottom the Weaver*,⁹⁷ taken from Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night's Dream*. And in 1656 two editions of five or six drolls of which he was nominally the author appeared under the title of *Actaeon And Diana, With A Pastorall Story of the Nymph Oenone; Followed By the several conceited humors Of Bumpkin, the Huntsman. Hobbinall, the Shepheard. Singing Simpkin. And John Swabber, the Sea-man . . . Printed at London . . . for the use of the Author, Robert Cox*. Dedicating his book "To all the Worthy-minded Gentry," Cox modestly remarked:

If you ever vouchsafed your Presence when it was presented on the Stage, I am confident, your (no way erring) judgements will now allow it as it then was intended, which was, rather to provoke a laughter, then occasion a contemplation.

But even here Cox had no claims whatever to originality. English plays—comedies and tragedies alike—had down to the year 1642 customarily ended with jigs—brief comedies sung and danced to ballad-tunes—and when the stage was suppressed, Cox merely substituted prose or verse jigs for the plays themselves. At least two of his drolls, *Singing Simpkin* and *The Black Man*, are nothing but revivals of popular old jigs, now lost, of which translations, earlier in date than his own work, survive in German, Dutch, and Scandinavian versions.⁹⁸

Cox's drolls were included also in Henry Marsh's collection of twenty-seven drolls published in 1662 under the title of *The Wits, OR, Sport upon Sport. In Select Pieces of Drollery, Digested into Scenes by way of Dialogue. Together with Variety of Humors of several Nations, fitted for the pleasure and content of all Persons, either in Court, City, Countrey, or Camp. The like never before Published*. It is interesting to find here that *Simpleton*, *Swobber*, and *Bumpkin* are followed by the statement, "Argument needless,

⁹⁷ Reprinted by Halliwell-Phillipps in 1860. Cf. also his *Shakespearian Drolls*, 1859.

⁹⁸ J. Bolte, *Die Singspiele der Englischen Komoedianten*, 1893, pp. 50 ff., 84 ff.

It being a Thorow Farce, and very well known." Two of the drolls are from Shakespeare, one from Jonson, and the remainder chiefly from Beaumont and Fletcher.

In Kirkman's *Wits* there is a frontispiece where Cox is represented in the rôle of Simpleton. This, with *Swobber*, was his greatest success. Kirkman states that Cox's superb acting won the approval of the Universities no less than that of London and the country. But it is improbable that he absented himself for long periods from London: he was apparently acting there in 1646, he was arrested at the Red Bull in 1653,⁹⁹ and he was printing his *Actaeon and Diana* at London in 1656. At that time he passes from the record.

It is worth adding that the acting of drolls did not cease, as is generally believed, with the Restoration. In the provincial towns throughout the seventeenth century drolls enjoyed undiminished popularity. Thus at Norwich the Mayor and Aldermen granted licenses for the presentation of "pieces of plays and drolls at the Red Lion, St. Stephens" on October 21, 1676, and of "plays, drolls, farces, interludes at the Red Lion" on March 9, 1687.¹ To the Commonwealth actors and audiences drolls were a real delight, but poets and playwrights despised them. Sir Aston Cockayne wrote in 1653 that, when a more liberal government decides to allow stage-plays, theatres will "scorne the rustick Prose Of a *Jack-pudding*."² Thanks, however, to the rustic prose of the drolls and to the more or less lenient attitude shown by the government, Cox and his fellows managed to eke out a living at the Red Bull.

Of course the government made some exceptions in the case of private entertainments. Certainly with its knowledge and consent James Shirley's masque of *Cupid and Death* was presented on March 26, 1653, before the Portuguese Ambassador. In the printed copy (bought by George Thomason on March 28) the printer informs his readers that "This Masque was born without ambition of more, than to make good a privat entertainment, though it found, without any address or design of the Author, an honourable

⁹⁹ See page 311, below.

¹ Walter Rye, *Depositions taken before the Mayor and Aldermen of Norwich*, 1905, pp. 143, 180. Very many other documents relating to the drama are printed in this work (pp. 128 f., 151, 160, 169, 171, 175).

² In verses prefixed to Richard Brome's *Five New Plays*.

acceptation from his Excellency, the Embassadour of *Portugal*, to whom it was presented by Mr. *Luke Channen* The Scaens wanted no elegance, or curiosity for the delight of the Spectator. The Musical compositions had in them a great soul of Harmony. For the Gentlemen that perform'd the Dances, thus much the Author did affirm, upon sight of their practise, that they shew'd themselves Masters of their quality." The mere fact that this masque was produced, to say nothing of its lavish scenery and costumes, is very significant: *Cupid and Death* foreshadowed the so-called private *Entertainment* of Sir William Davenant that was to follow three years later.

Richard Flecknoe, in his *Miscellania* (March 8, 1653), gives striking testimony of the desolation of the old Blackfriars play-house. "Passing on to Black-fryers," he said, "and seeing never a *Play-bil* on the Gate, no *Coaches* on the place, nor *Doorkeeper* at the *Play-house* door, with his *Boxe* like a *Church-warden*, desiring you to remember the poor *Players*, I cannot but say for *Epilogue* to all the *Playes* were ever Acted there [that the Puritans]

Have made with their Raylings the *Players* as poore
As were the *Fryers* and *Poets* before."

But in April of this year, so *Mercurius Democritus* (April 20-27) declares, puppet-plays and rope-dancing had become so common, so stale, that tired by the very monotony of these entertainments audiences were growing scarce, to the consequent impoverishment of the actors. To Londoners who could remember the great plays of the pre-war period, these performances must have seemed pitiful indeed. The conclusion *Democritus* drew was reasonable and pointed:

It were much to be desired (since some harmlesse, moderate recreation takes off mens mindes from hatching Treason, felonies, whordoms, murders and the like) that such fools-bables [as puppet-plays] were flung by, and that the poor Comedians, whose sufferings have been very great, were permitted to represent some Modest and harmless *Pastoralls*, so that no offence might be in them either against the present Government, Religion or Modesty.

But as this appeal could have no favorable result, *Democritus* resumed its patronage of drolls and rope-dances; and in June, 1653, light-heartedly printed the following remarkable advertisement of a Red Bull attraction:

At the *Red-Bull* in *St. Johns street* on Thursday next, being the Ninth of June, 1633 [*i. e.*, 1653]. There is a Prettie Conceited fellow that hath challenged the *Dromedary* lately come out of *Barbary*, to dance with him *Cap a Pee*, on the Low Rope . . . As also running up a board with *Rapiers*, and a new countrey Dance called the *Horn-Dance*, never before presented; performed by the ablest Persons of that *Ciwill quality* in *England*. There will also appear a merry conceited Fellow which hath formerly given content.

*And you may come and return with safety.*³

The merry conceited fellow here advertised was none other than the "incomparable Robert Cox"; but in spite of the confident statement about the safety of attending the performance, both Cox and his audience met with an unpleasant surprise—exactly as Francis Kirkman tells in his preface to the *Wits*. Employed by the rope-and sword-dancers to present the well-known jig, or droll, of *John Swobber*, Cox was betrayed to the soldiers by two jealous rivals: the theatre was raided, the spectators fined five shillings each, and Cox imprisoned. In reporting this unhappy sequel to its advertisement, *Democritus* (June 22-29) gives some interesting facts about Cox—the only facts of this nature yet discovered:

The Rope dancers having impled one Mr. Cox an Actor, (a very honest though impoverished man, who is not only as well as others, put by the practice of his Calling, but charged with a poor Wife, and 5 helplesse Infants) to present a modest and ha[r]mless jigge, calle[d] *Swobber*, yet two of his own quallity, envying their poor brother should get a little bread for his Children, basely and unworthily betrayed him to the Souldie[r]s, and so abused many of the Gentry that formerly had been their Benefactors, who were forced to pay to the Souldiers 5 s. a piece for their coming out, as well as for their going in,

An Action, so superlatively base,
Would bash the Devil in an Anticks face.

Obviously jealousy among the actors themselves brought many woes that otherwise could have been avoided. Furthermore, the incident clearly reminds us that the drolls were on as shaky a legal basis as were plays. Perhaps the soldiers connived at acting only when to do so was to their own financial advantage.

The most drastic of all the Commonwealth's laws against printing was issued on January 7, 1653; rigid application of the law followed, so that within two months eighteen printers had been

³ *Mercurius Democritus*, June 1-8, 1653, p. 463.

imprisoned in Newgate or the Gatehouse.⁴ But towards the end of the year censorship was considerably relaxed, and even in signed works balladists, pamphleteers, and playwrights wrote of the government with the utmost frankness. For example, the ardent Royalist Alexander Brome, in verses prefixed to Richard Brome's *Five New Plays* (1653), remarked:

But *Times* are chang'd; as tis worth our note,
Bishops and *Players* both suffer'd in one *Vote*.
 And reason good, for they had cause to feare 'em,
 One did *suppresse* their *Schismes*, and tother jeere 'em.

Plays will, nevertheless, he boldly declared, live to see the fall of those who have crushed the stage. Sir Aston Cokayne contributed verses with a like note:

Then we shall still have *Playes!* and though we may
 Not them in their full Glories yet display;
 Yet we may please our selves by reading them,
 Till a more Noble Act this Act condemne.
 Happy will that day be . . .

Cautious, however, is the address of "The Stationer to the Reader" in Robert Mead's *Combat of Love and Friendship* (1653):⁵

The Scene is vanish'd and with it, all encouragement to this musical part of humane Learning. I murmur not against any that sit at the helm, though Policy of State have formerly allow'd the exercise of these Recreations in time of Troubles, as a means to divert Tumultuary and Turbulent spirits, whose otherwise uncorrected heat would be employ'd to the distraction of the most considerable Affaires, and Persons of the Common Wealth.

The witty author of *Bibliotheca Parliamenti* (1653) included among his burlesque "Acts and Orders" "An act for the speedy suppressing all Plays, the Fools being all turned Commanders or Parliament men."⁶

⁴ J. B. Williams, *Hist. Eng. Journalism*, p. 151.

⁵ Printed in 1654 according to the title-page. Thomason bought his copy on November 2, 1653.

⁶ Further allusions to the stage and the players during 1653 will be found in *Mercurius Democritus*, September 14-21, p. 582; *Mercurius Politicus*, October 13-20, p. 1795, and John Webster's *The Picture of Mercurius Politicus* [October 23], 1653, p. 7.

The Roundheads (a name "which was first invented by some prophane Stage-players, for from that shop of the Divel, so farre as I remember, that Nick-name first came" ⁷) made periodic attempts to tighten their grip on public amusements. On March 31, 1654, as James Wright phrased it, "Cock-fighting was prohibited by one of *Oliver's Acts*." ⁸ A letter was sent by the Privy Council on July 6 to Captain Charles Howard, directing the suppression of horse-racing in the north of England for six months; and a somewhat mystifying manuscript note added to the letter reads, "Old Noll's rules to put down interludes [?] of the 99, then to govern the 100th." ⁹ On August 28 an ordinance directing the ejectment of ministers and schoolmasters who encouraged or countenanced "Stage-plays, or such Licentious practices" was issued; and was reissued a year later (October 26, 1655). ¹⁰ From the number of such ordinances issued during the interregnum, it appears that there were many weak brethren in the ranks of teachers and preachers. The government, too, probably kept itself informed of the plays given among the exiled royal family. Various plays were performed in Holland. J. Nicholas, writing to Lord Clarendon's secretary, Edgeman, on April 23, 1654, told of the plan of the gentlemen and maids of honor to act at Whitsuntide before the Princess Royal Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King*, and remarked that "all loyal persons are astonished when they hear it named." ¹¹

In London rope-dancing went on regularly. In June, 1654, *Mercurius Fumigosus* ¹² advertised that "There is an *Albion* Blackamore lately come to Town that is . . . well skill'd in *Dancing on the Ropes*." This was "the Turk," a rope-dancer whose fame spread all over London. There are several advertisements of

⁷ Thomas Hall, *The Loathsomeness of Long Hair*, 1654, p. 19 (Bodleian, Wood 653/6).

⁸ *Historia Histrionica*, p. 32.

⁹ *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1654, pp. xxi, 246; Ward, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, III, 281.

¹⁰ Firth and Rait, *Laws and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, II, 977; *Mercurius Politicus*, October 25-November 1, 1655, p. 5721.

¹¹ *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, I, 339; II, 353.

¹² June 28-July 5.

his performances in *Mercurius Fumigosus*. Describing one performance, *Fumigosus*¹³ declares that a

woman being in to see him clamber up the Ropes, said, Sure, if he be not the Devil, the Devil begot him; no truly Neighbor, quoth another Woman, I *know* him, as well as a Beggar *knows* his dish; hee is a *Black-fryers Water-man*, and his Mother is living on the *Bank-side*, and as I have often heard her say, *Her son learnt this Art, when he was a Sea-boy, only was a little since taught some Pretty Tricks by a Jack-pudding neer Long-Lane.*

Whatever be the truth of this explanation (which clarifies the term "an Albion blackamore"), the Turk's popularity continued for several years. On May 15, 1657, John Evelyn stepped in [to the Red Bull?]

to see a famous rope-dancer, called *the Turk*. I saw even to astonishment the agility with which he performed; he walked barefooted, taking hold by his toes only of a rope almost perpendicular, and without so much as touching it with his hands; he danced blindfold on the high rope, and with a boy of twelve years old tied to one of his feet about twenty feet beneath him, dangling as he danced, yet he moved as nimbly as if it had been but a feather. Lastly, he stood on his head, on the top of a very high mast, danced on a small rope that was very slack, and finally flew down the perpendicular, on his breast, his head foremost, his legs and arms extended, with divers other activities.

No mean substitute, this, for plays! So clever an acrobat would draw huge crowds to-day. His popularity when the Commonwealth had banned the legitimate stage is not to be wondered at. John Wright, a Red Bull actor,¹⁴ wrote "A new Song on the Turkish Artist which is lately come into England, which danceth on a Rope

¹³ August 30-September 6, 1654. Other advertisements of the Turk occur in *Fumigosus* for August 23-30, 1654, and January 17-24, 1655.

¹⁴ He is mentioned as an actor at the Red Bull on September 14, 1655, in a ballad quoted below. In various editions of *Wit and Mirth, or Pills to Purge Melancholy* (e. g., 1719, IV, 8) and in Phillips's *Mysteries of Love and Eloquence* (ca. 1656) occurs a ballad "On the Death of Jo. Wright. To the Tune of Chevy Chase," containing the lines,

"He made the Ballad of the *Turk*,
And sung it in the street."

Yet, says *Pills*, he "dyed Poor." Wright is a new name among actors, I believe, and the significance of the ballad in *Pills* has not before been recognized.

eight and thirty foot from the ground," which was included in John Cotgrave's *Wits Interpreter* (1655).¹⁵ Two stanzas may be quoted for comparison with Evelyn's description.

A Wight there is come out of the East,
A mortal of great fame;
He looks like a man, for he is not a beast,
Yet he has never a Christian name:
Some say he's a Turk, some call him a Jew,
For ten that belie him, scarce one tels true,
Let him be what he will, 'tis all one to you;
But yet he shall be a Turk.

On a sloping cord he'l go you shall see,
Even from the very ground,
Full sixty foot high, where I would not be,
Though you'd give me a thousand pound.
First he stands & makes faces & looks down below,
Would I had 12 d. for each could not do so,
By my troth I'de never make ballad mo,
But yet [he shall be a Turk].

According to a song in *Choyce Drollery* (1656) ¹⁶ women, too, took part in rope-dancing. Perhaps here, rather than in Davenant's productions, is the real beginning of women's professional appearances on the English stage.

But superior even to the Turk were his rivals at the Red Bull,—
"the lately desceased *Montford*, *Peadle*, and now *Christ. Whitehead*, who for agility of body, and neatness in Dancing,

Doth in best iudgements, as farr exceed the Turks,
*As Shakspeare Haywood in his Commick Works."*¹⁷

¹⁵ Pp. 317-320; 2nd ed., 1662, pp. 322-325.

¹⁶ Ed. J. W. Ebsworth, p. 31. It begins:

A Story strange I will you tell,
But not so strange as true,
Of a woman that danc'd upon the ropes,
And so did her husband too.
With a dildo, dildo, dildo,
With a dildo, dildo, dee,
Some say 'twas a man, but it was a woman
As plain report may see.

¹⁷ *Mercurius Fumigosus*, August 23-30, 1654, p. 118. For Peadle see *Murray's English Dramatic Companies*, II, 248, 253, 342, 346.

As this trio, along with Nicholas Spencer, John Capon, Robert Cox, and the Turk, performed at the Red Bull, it seems probable that the performances there were often of an order that merited praise—even such high praise as that bestowed by Francis Kirkman years later.

The Red Bull, then, prospered; but the other London playhouses had apparently by this time given up the unequal struggle. In *Mercurius Fumigosus* for November 1-8, 1654, appeared the following sympathetic account of the struggles and the poverty of London stage-players:

The Bawdes in the Suburbs are Petitioning to put down the poor *Actors*, who have a long time lingered under the heavy yoke of Poverty, and fed themselves and families with hunger, sighs, and tears; yet not one of these poor men during this long Winter of many years debarment from the exercise of that Quallity wherein they were bred, but have continued alwayes Civill and honest in life and conversation, not one of them branded with any foul *Crime* (which such exigences as *Poverty* commonly produces) and truly Playes have better recreated the mindes of ingenious men, then any other exercise; and with modest Presumption, may doubtless gain the affection of the Noblest Spirits in any City or Country.

Unquestionably the Red Bull kept open all the time except when an occasional raid turned its mirth to mourning. Bountiful allusions in John Crouch's papers establish that fact beyond all cavil,—such allusions, for example, as this passage in *Mercurius Fumigosus* for November 15-22, 1654:

Two *cross-legg'd Creatures* called *Sutorians*, having a great minde to learn the right Art of Preaching, would the other day needs go to the *Red-Bull* to learn *speech* and *Action* of the *Players* before they come to *Exercise* or hold *forth*.

Emboldened, or made careless, by their success the Red Bull players publicly boasted that they could violate the anti-stage laws with impunity. As a result, on December 30, 1654, soldiers raided the Red Bull while a performance of *Wit Without Money* was being given, and robbed the actors of their costumes, though none of the reports of the raid indicates either that the players were arrested or the spectators fined.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Perfect Account of the Daily Intelligence*, December 27-January 3, p. 1663: "This day the Players at the Red-Bull (being gotten into all their borrowed gallantry, and ready to act) were by some of the Souldiery

Amateur theatricals did not die under the ban of Parliament. Perhaps, indeed, this ban, directed at public performances in and near London, did much to increase them. John Rowe, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, wrote in 1654 a tract called *Tragi-Comœdia. Being A Brief Relation of the Strange, And Wonderfull hand of God discovered at Witny, in the Comedy Acted there February the third* [1654],¹⁹ which was directed at a group of amateurs, all "countrymen," who had presumed to act an old play of *Mucedorus and Amadine*. "The Actors of the *Play* were Countrey-men; most of them, for any thing I can heare, all of *Stanton-Harcourt* Parish. The punctuall time of their first Learning the *Play*, cannot be certainly set downe: but this we have been told, they had been learning it ever since *Michaelmas*, and had been Acting privatly every week . . . they began to Act it in a more publike manner about *Christmas*, and Acted it three or foure times in their own Parish, they Acted it likewise in severall neighbowring Parishes, as *Moore, Stanlake, South-Leigh, Cumner*." At Witny they sought permission to use the Town Hall, but when this was denied took the White Hart Inn. When the play began, at seven p. m., some three or four hundred persons were in the audience, while "others in the Yard pressed sorely to get in." As for the play itself—"they were ordinarily about three houres in acting it"—only two hours of the performance had passed when part of the floor of the inn collapsed, hurling players and audience alike into the wreckage, killing several, injuring many, and, in the opinion of John Rowe, showing the fearful judgment of God on frivolity and sin. He ends his account

dispoyled of all their bravery; but the Souldiery carryed themselves very civilly towards the Audience." *The Weekly Intelligencer*, December 26-January 2, p. 158, dates the raid January 1, 1654/5, and gives this account: "The players at the *Red-bull* were on the last Saturday despoiled of their acting cl[o]aths by some of the soldiery, they having not so ful a liberty as they pretended." *Mercurius Fumigosus*, December 27-January 3; p. 247, says: "The next day the *Players* presuming to Act *Witt without money*, were rowted by the Souldiers,

*Who Acting better then the Players, yet,
Left them sans money, Cloaths or Witt."*

C. H. Firth (*Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, VI, 122) has noticed the *Perfect Account's* story of this raid.

¹⁹Mentioned also by Ward, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, III, 281.

with an appalling eighty-page sermon in which he inveighs against plays, drawing liberally on the materials brought together in Prynne's *Histrio-mastix*.

In February, 1655, at London, a less tragic but still an unpleasant ending came to a proposed amateur play. There was

a Company of young *Citts* that met the last week to act a *Comedy*, called *Knavery in all Trades*, but putting down their *Half Crowns* apiece the first *meeting* for a *stock*, and to engage each *Person* to the performance of his *Part*, the chief of them, who was to act the *Knave in grain*, having his *Part* studded before-hand, having taken about 30. s. of his fellow *Actors* money, made an *Exit* instead of an *Entrance*, and so is gone to *Holland*,

*Leaving those Commick witless blades,
To gain it up, by Knav'ry in their Trades,
To Act in shops, and not on Stages,
Which is more gainfull, in these later Ages.*²⁰

The comedy here referred to may perhaps be that printed in 1640 under the title of *The Knave in Graine, New Vampt*, by J. D., Gentleman.²¹ To the same period as this unlucky comedy belongs *The Gossips Braule, Or, The Women weare the Breeches, A Mock Comedy* (January 30, 1655). The principal rôles are Nick Pot, a Tapster; Jone Ruggles, a Dungel-raker; Doll Crabb, a Fish-woman; Megg Lant-Ale, a Tub-woman; Bess Bung-hole, an Hostice: and certainly they must have given grave offense to the Puritans and delight to the godless.

The Hope and Blackfriars playhouses now came to inglorious ends, and their passing made Cromwell's triumph seem greater and more important than actually it was. Blackfriars was pulled down on August 6, 1655, to make room for tenements. The Hope is said to have been converted, also, into tenements "by Thomas Walker, a Peticoate Maker in Cannon Streete, on Tuesday the 25 day of March 1656. Seuen of Mr. Godfries Beares, by the command of Thomas Pride, then hie Sheriefe of Surry, were then shot to death, On Saterdag the 9 day of February 1655, by a Company of Souldiers."²²

²⁰ *Mercurius Fumigosus*, February 7-14, 1655, p. 294.

²¹ British Museum, 643. c. 22.

²² *The Academy*, xxii, 315; Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, pp. 233, 337. On Mr. Godfrey see Collier, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Poetry*, 1879, iii, 102, and *Merry Drollery*, ed. J. W. Ebsworth, p. 210.

On September 14, 1655, the Red Bull was again raided, and many "cracked crowns" resulted, presumably among both actors and audience. The musicians escaped without losing their instruments; but the actors were arrested and their rich clothing confiscated. From each of the spectators a fine of five shillings was demanded, but as very many were ladies who had not so much money, "some gage or other" was allowed to be substituted for the actual cash. These gages took the form of new hoods, scarfs, and aprons, and, so the *Weekly Intelligencer* reports, were afterwards "civilly restored to the owners."²³ A ballad about this raid was composed immediately and published in *Sportive Wit* (1655).²⁴

²³ *The Weekly Intelligencer*, September 11-18, 1655: "This Day proved Tragical to the *Players* at the *Red Bull*, their Acting being against an Act of Parliament, the *Soldiers* secured the persons of some of them who were upon the Stage, and in the *Tyrin-house*, they seized also upon their cloaths in which they acted, a great part whereof was very rich, it never fared worse with the spectators then at this present, for those who had monies payed their five shillings apeece, those who had none to satisfie their forfeits, did leave their Cloaks behind them, the Tragedy of the Actors, and the Spectators, was the Comedy of the soldiers. There was abundance of the Female Sex, who not able to pay 5 s. did leave some gage or other behind them, insomuch that although the next day after the Fair, was expected to be a new *Faire* of Hoods, of Aprons, and of Scarfs, all which their poverty being made known, and after some check for their Trespasse, were civilly restored to the Owners." *Mercurius Fumigosus*, September 12-19, p. 546, says: "The *Players* at the *Red-bull*, and all the *Jack-Puddings* of *Southwark Faire*, last Friday listed themselves for Souldiers, a little after, a great *Rowt* was given, some Prisoners taken, which presently paying their *Ransoms*, were released.

*So were the Puddings, and the Fiddlers,
The Actors and the hy-down Diddlers,
Put by their Action, and their Parts,
And led away with heavy hearts."*

Finally, J. Banks wrote to Williamson (*Calendar State Papers, Domestic*, 1655, p. 336): "At the playhouse this week, many were put to the rout by the soldiers, and had broken crowns; the corporal would have been entrapped, had he not been vigilant." C. H. Firth (*Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, vi, 122) has called attention to the foregoing passage from *The Weekly Intelligencer*. Cf. also Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 306.

²⁴ Pp. 88-89 (Bodleian). I observe that J. W. Ebsworth has also reprinted this ballad among the notes (pp. 285-286) to his *Choyce Drollery* (1876).

It runs:

A SONG

1.

The fourteenth of September
I very well remember,
 When people had eaten and fed full,
Many men, they say,
Would needs go to a Play,
 But they saw a great rout at the red Bull.

2.

The Soldiers they came,
(The blinde and the lame)
 To visit and undo the Players;
And women without Gowns,
They said they would have Crowns;
 But they were no good Sooth-sayers.

3.

Then *Jo: Wright* they met,
Yet nothing could get,
 And *Tom Jay* i' th' same condition:
The fire men they
Wou'd ha' made 'em a prey,
 But they scorn'd to make a petition.

4.

The Minstrills they
Had the hap that day,
 (Well fare a very good token)
To keep (from the chase)
The fiddle and the case,
 For the instruments scap'd unbroken.

5.

The poor and the rich,
The w . . . and the b . . . ,
 Were every one at a losse,
But the Players were all
Turn'd (as weakest) to the wall,
 And 'tis thought had the greatest losse.

This raid seems to have attracted much more than usual interest, but it did not result in the closing of the Red Bull. Some four months later—on January 8, 1656—the Privy Council instructed Major-General Desborow to suppress all horse-races, cock-fight-

ing, bear-baiting, and stage-plays by seizing the persons gathered together on such occasions.²⁵ But no lasting results came from the order.

The final triumph of the stage began with Sir William Davenant's operatic productions in 1656. Davenant, who had been imprisoned by the government from 1650 to August 4, 1654, feared to risk a further imprisonment, and proceeded with great caution. Apparently before giving his initial performance, he submitted to Secretary of State Thurloe a document dealing with the desirability of theatrical entertainments, in which he argued from the point of view of both politics and economics. The letter stressed the fact that many people were leaving London for the country, quite thirteen houses owned by the nobility being rented or offered for rent; pointed out that Englishmen had always required "continuall divertisements, being otherwise naturally inclin'd to that melancholy that breeds sedition"; insisted that dramatic entertainments must be allowed not only to prevent the people from too much thinking on "the absence of the adverse party [of Charles II], but alsoe to entertain a new generation of youth uningag'd in the late differences" and to withdraw them "from licentiousnesse, gaming, and discontent." That Davenant's plan of entertaining had been carefully premeditated appears from his concluding remark with its reference to *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*: "If morall representations may be allow'd (being without obscenenesse, profanenesse, and scandall) the first arguments may consist of the Spaniards' barbarous conquests in the West Indies and of their severall cruelties there exercis'd upon the subjects of this nation: of which some use may be made." Representations of this type, he concludes, can escape any charge of levity, since they were used by the Athenians and the Romans to influence the people and in their interests.²⁶

By his diplomacy and his careful avoidance of the term *stage-play* Davenant succeeded in circumventing the anti-stage laws and in winning the support of certain government officials, among them the Lord Keeper, Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke. In the first edition

²⁵ *Cal. State Papers, Dom.*, 1655-6, p. 103.

²⁶ This document, said to be in Davenant's own handwriting, was discovered and printed by Professor C. H. Firth in the *English Historical Review*, 1903, xviii, 319-321.

of *Sportive Wit*,²⁷ published in 1656, was included a lampoon on Davenant called "How *Daphne* payes his Debts." It asserts that because of the pressure exerted on him by his creditors Davenant determined to become Master of the Revels, a position which he himself openly declared had been promised him by the government; that he hired a house in which to present "*masques à la mode de France*," the first of these being given (in or before 1656) at Apothecaries Hall; that he had made further arrangements for performances at the Red Bull, the Cockpit, and at Lincoln's Inn Fields, as six friends of his had advanced £6000 to support his projects. Even after due allowance has been made for exaggeration, no more important document dealing with Davenant's activities has been discovered. The mention of Apothecaries Hall and Lincoln's Inn Fields is particularly interesting, since neither of these places has been supposed to have been used for plays before 1661. Of the twenty-nine stanzas in the lampoon the following are the most important:

Quoth he, *I now have made my book,*
A fam'd Heroic Poem,
For which I'm promis'd so many pounds,
That I know not where to bestow 'em.

But when this book it did come forth
 As some have given a hinting,
 The gains of his pitifull Poetry
 Scarce paid for paper & printing,

At the months end they come again,
 Molesting him like Devils.
Well now Ile pay ye all, quoth he,
I must be master o' th' Revels.

The State hath promis'd this to me,
As the Clerk of the Parliament saith,
And I hope that you will do as I do,
Believe the PVBLIQUE FAITH.

Already I have hir'd a house,
Wherein to sing and dance;
And now the Ladies shall have Masques
Made a la mode de France.

²⁷ Sig. Hh4v-Hh6v (Bodleian).

²⁸ *Gondibert*, of course.

This house was Potheccaries Hall,
 I tell to him that asks;
 Because of a meeting that was there,
 Which he said was one of his Masques.

If there you finde him not come to *S. Jones's*,
 Where his next house is hiring,
 And if you come quickly, you shall see
 The Players themselves attiring.

For surely he doth play, but must
 Be watched like *Bacons* head,
Time is, Time was, but still you come
 When the *Time past* is said.

I can tell y' of more of 's houses, one
 In *fields* of *Lincolns Inne*,
 Another in *Drury Lane*: and thus
Daphne will never lin——.²⁹

Thus little you think that *Daphne* hath
 A Play with you begun,
 Which is the cause you interrupt him,
 Ere the fifth Act be done.

Now the fifth Act is never done,
 Till th' *Exit* all fulfill;
 Let him but make his *Exit* first,
 And then do what you will.

Yet *Daphne*, if they still molest thee,
 Faith, in the minde I'm in,
 I'd do as Players use to do,
 Pay my great summes in tin.

.

Now in these houses he hath men,
 And cloathes to make them trim;
 For six good friends of his laid out
 Six thousand pounds for him.

Then *Daphne* he will get at least
 A hundred pounds a day:
 Why I think the Devil's in you all,
 Can't you one minute stay?

"*Daphne's*" productions had begun at least as early as May 21, 1656, when at Rutland House in Aldersgate Street he gave an

²⁹ *Sic* in the original.

operatic venture called *The First Days Entertainment at Rutland-House, By Declamations and Musick: After the manner of the Ancients*.³⁰ This curious hodge-podge of music and of dialogues was a semi-private entertainment to which admission was charged; but only 150 people of the 450 for which preparation was made attended.³¹ The first dialogue represents Diogenes and Aristophanes as setting forth their views on public amusements, particularly scenery and music; the second presents a Parisian and a Londoner who expatiate on the respective merits of Paris and London. In the entertainment there was nothing—unless, perhaps, the appearance of a woman as a singer—to which the government could have objected; certainly it had no resemblance to stage-plays, a fact pointed out significantly in the epilogue:

Perhaps, some were so cozen'd as to come
To see us weave in the dramatic loom.

These were your plays, but get them if you can.

To get them if he could was, of course, Davenant's own purpose, but he proposed to attain that end legally, not by illegal performances. In August³² he produced, also at Rutland House, *The Siege of Rhodes*, "a Representation by the Art of Prospective in Scenes, and the Story sung in Recitative Musick." Fearing that "the nicety of the times"—the hostility of the government to the stage—would prevent Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke from attending and from seeing that the performance was violating no laws, and anxious to retain his favor, Davenant sent him "hot from the Press, what we represent; making your Lordship," he added tactfully, "my supreme Judge, though I despair to have the Honour of inviting you to be a Spectator."³³ With *The Siege of Rhodes* opera was introduced to England. In composing it Davenant drew to

³⁰ Thomason bought his copy (E. 1648/2) on November 22, 1656, though the title-page is dated 1657.

³¹ Cf. *Notes and Queries*, 2nd Series, V, 231. There is a good account of the *Entertainment* in *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1655/6*, p. 396 (Vol. 128, No. 108).

³² The preface of the printed copy (which Thomason bought on September 29, 1656) is dated August 17. Whitelocke notes that he got a copy from Davenant on September 3.

³³ Whitelocke's *Memorials*, p. 650 (September 3).

some extent on his knowledge of Continental operas.³⁴ He trusted through this new medium of dramatic expression to lead gradually to the abolition of laws against the stage. A comparison of the dates of his preface and of his letter to Whitelocke indicates that a number of performances of the *Siege* were given.

The production of these two musical entertainments did not lead at once to any relaxation of the laws, but it can hardly be doubted that by Davenant's success surreptitious performances of plays were stimulated. William Chamberlayne, however, in the preface to his play of *Love's Victory* (1658)—which "was begot Whilst Clamorous war's wild fury was so hot"—speaks of "the mourning Stage being silent," condemned by the "sin of parasites." Plays in pamphlet form still abounded. Among them is Thomas Brewer's *A Knot of Fooles* (May 2, 1657), compared by its author to a puppet-play, but really a droll (originally performed in 1613) that could easily have been acted. It is of exactly the same type as the drolls of Robert Cox. As a straw showing the direction of the wind, William Cartwright in 1658 reprinted Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* under the title of *An Actor's Vindication*.

Davenant's next production was given publicly at the Cockpit playhouse. This was *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, "Expressed by Instrumentall and Vocall Musick, and by the Art of Perspective in Scenes." The subject and title were happy, for the government was at this time engaged in a war with Spain; and the opera had a successful run. In the printed copy, which George Thomason dated July 25, 1658, readers are informed that the entertainment is "represented daily at the Cockpit in Drury-Lane, At Three after noone punctually" and that "Notwithstanding the great expence necessary to Scenes, and other ornaments in this Entertainment, there is a good provision made of places for a shilling. And it shall begin certainly at 3 after noon." Just how long the play ran cannot be determined. The war with Spain and the Lord Protector's illness and death (September 3, 1658) perhaps prevented any active steps either for or against Davenant for opening a proscribed public theatre. A ballad contemporary with and describing a performance of *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in*

³⁴ Cf. John Evelyn's account in his *Diary* of an opera in Venice, June, 1645. He first mentions opera, explaining the term, on November 19, 1644.

Peru is preserved in manuscript,³⁵ and as it has escaped the notice of students of the drama is here reprinted.

Peru:

Or, a new Ballad.
To an old Tune
Called

The Building of Paules;
Or,
Oh, Shee's the bravest F——
That ever wore a Garter, &c.

1.

Now God preserve the Realme
And Him that sits at Helme!
I will tell you of a new Story,
Of Sir William & his Apes,
With full many merry Japes,
Much after the rate of "John Dory."

2.

This sight is to be seene
Neere the streete that's called Queene,
And the people haue nam'd it the Opera;
But the devill take my wife
If all the dayes of my lyfe
I did ever see such a Foppery.

3.

Where first there's one begins,
With a Trip & a Cringe,
And a face set in Starch, to Accost 'um;
I, and with a Speech to boote,
That hath neither head nor foote,
Might haue serv'd for a Charterhouse Rostrum.

4.

Oh, he lookt so like a Jew
'Twould haue made a man to spew,
When he tould 'um 'here was this,' 'here was that';

* MS. Ashmole 36, fols. 163-164. There is a very late (and hardly an easily accessible) printed copy (*D.*) in Dryden's *Miscellany Poems*, Third Part, 1716, pp. 323-325. Dryden's version—which has no tune and which is entitled "A Ballad against the Opera, call'd, The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, Writ by Sir W. D'Avenant"—is almost identical with that of the MS., save for a number of verbal differences, a few of which are indicated in the foot-notes below.

Just like him that shews the ³⁶ Tombes—
For when the totall comes,
 'Tis two houres of the Lord knowes what.

5.

Nor must I here forgett—
Oh, the Musick! how 'twas sett,
 Bate ³⁷ two Ayres & a halfe; And, by Jove,³⁸
All the rest was such a Jigg,
Like the Squeaking of a Pigg,
 Or Catts when they're making their love.³⁸

6.

The next thing was the Sceane,
And that—oh, 'twas laine,
 Now the Lord he knows where, in Peru;
With a Story, for the Nonce,
Of Raw head & bloody Bones,
 But the divell a word on 't was true.

7.

There might you haue seene an Ape
With his fellow for to Gape,
 Now dauncing, & then turning ore;
What cannot Poets doe?—
They can find out in Peru
 Things noe man euer saw before.

8.

When, presently, the Spaniard
Strutts in with his longe whaniard—³⁹
 Now, Lord of thy mercy, how grim!
Who 'ld hae thocht *that* christian men
Would haue eaten vp Children,
 Had we not seene 'um do ut Limbe by Limbe?

9.

Oh, more Cruelty yet!
Like a Pigg vpon a Spitt,
 Here lyes one; there's another boyld to Jelly:
Just so the People stare
At an Oxe in the Fayre
 Rosted whole, with a puddings in 's belly.

10.

Troth, I durst haue layne my head
That the King he had beene dead,

³⁶ Shews the (*D.*): *MS.* apparently sheverethe.

³⁷ Bate: Dise (*D.*)

³⁸ Jove, love (*D.*): *MS.* Jawe, lawe (?).

³⁹ Whaniard: Whinyard (*D.*).

When I saw how they basted & carv'd him;
 Had he not come vp againe,
 On the Stage, for to complayne
 How scurvily the Rogues they had serv'd him.

11.

A litle farther in
 Hangs a third, by the Chin,
 And a fourth cut out into quarters.
 Oh, that Fox had then bene living!—
 They had been sure of Heaven,
 Or at least been some of his Martyrs.

12.

But (which was strange againe)
 The Indians they had slayne
 Came dauncinge in all in a Troope;
 But, oh, giue me the last,
 Ffor as often as he past,
 Hee still trembled like a dogg in a Hoope.

13.

And now, my Seignieur Shrugg,⁴⁰
 In good faith, you may goe Jogg;
 Ffor Sir William ^a will haue somewhat to bragg on;
 Oh, the English boyes are come,
 With the Fife & the Drum,
 And the Knight must still conquer the Draggon.

14.

And so my Story's done,
 And Ile end, as I begun,
 With a word, & I care now who knows it:
 God keep ^a vs greate & small,
 And blesse vs some & all
 From euery such pitifull Poet.

On October 15, 1658, Dr. Thomas Smith, of Cockermouth, wrote to his friend Sir Daniel Fleming: "Sir William Davenant, the poet laureate, has obtained permission for stage plays and the Fortune Playhouse is being trimmed up."⁴¹ But this is mere gossip,—interesting enough as such,—for opera was permitted, not stage-plays, the Cockpit was used by Davenant, not the Fortune. Appar-

⁴⁰ Shrugg: Strugge (*D.*).

⁴¹ William: Will (*D.*).

⁴² MS. keeps.

⁴³ *Hist. mss. Commission Report*, 12, Appendix, Pt. VII, 23; W. J. Lawrence, *The Elizabethan Playhouse*, Second Series, p. 132.

ently *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* was being shown in December,—to the great displeasure of the Presbyterians. One of the latter wrote, on December 14, that “it is thought the opera will speedily go down; the godly party are so much discontented with it.”⁴⁴ Nine days later (December 23) Richard Cromwell and the Council of State appointed a committee to examine the author and actors of “the opera shewed at the Cockpit,” to inform themselves of the nature of the performance, to examine by what authority it had been publicly given, and to make a general report on the subject of stage-plays.⁴⁵ Evidently the use of the term *opera* had raised some doubts as to the application of the anti-stage laws. What report the Committee made does not appear: that no fault was found with Davenant seems probable, especially since Sir Henry Herbert, after the Restoration, spitefully wrote to Charles II that the poet “obtained leave of Oliver and Richard Cromwell to vent his operas, at a time when your petitioner [Herbert] owned not their authority” and (a statement that reminds one of the ballad of “Daphne”) “exercised the office of Master of the Revells to Oliver the Tyrant.”⁴⁶ Certainly no hostile action was taken against Davenant, for in 1659 his *Siege of Rhodes* was again played at the Cockpit, as was also his new entertainment of *The History of Sir Francis Drake*.

The history of the year 1659 is not so simple as all previous writers would have us believe. Possibly the government made a distinction between plays and operas, and prohibited only the former. That this was the case seems to be suggested by a comment in *Endlesse Queries: Or An End to Queries* (June 13, 1659):

⁴⁴ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁴⁵ *Publick Intelligencer*, December 20-27, 1658, p. 112:

“A course is ordered for taking into consideration the *Opera* shewed at the *Cockpit* in *Drury-lane*, and the persons to whom it stands referr’d are to send for the Poet and Actors, and to inform themselves of the nature of the work, and to examine by what authority the same is exposed to publick view; and they are also to take the best information they can concerning the acting of Stage-playes, and upon the whole to make report, &c.”

This account is repeated verbatim in *Mercurius Politicus*, December 23-30, p. 118. Attention was first called to it in Malone’s *Variorum Shakespeare*, III, 93, and it is quoted in R. W. Lowe’s *Thomas Betterton*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁶ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Whether the Stage-players being turned out of doores, cannot, to get their livings, in imitation of the *Opera*, set up dumb Musick, and instead of black patches smut Ladies in their faces that shall not observe their part they are to play, according to the wisdom of the Ancients.

But there is a cryptic remark about Davenant and the stage in Edmund Gayton's *Art of Longevity* (1659):⁴⁷

For Playes are down, unless the puppet-play,
Sir *William's* lost, both *Oyle* and *Opera*;
The noble Cock-fight done, the harmless bears
Are more then ring'd by th' nose or by the ears.

Beyond question plays were still regarded as illegal and were punished by fines, under the provisions of the old ordinance of January 1, 1648. From the Cockpit playhouse itself,—where Davenant's operas were at least part of the time being produced,—fines amounting to £3. 8s. 6d. were exacted "by order of the justices" during 1659 and turned over to the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields.⁴⁸ Davenant himself was implicated in the premature rising led by Sir George Booth for the restoration of Charles II, and was for a time imprisoned, being released on August 16, 1659. This incident can hardly have aided the cause of the actors. But Richard Cromwell's government was adopting a more lenient policy towards amusements and towards the press. Complete liberty of the press was granted, a fact bewailed by the *Weekly Intelligencer* of June 14-21, 1659.

That the Cockpit and the Red Bull gave plays regularly during 1659-60 is indisputable. Nevertheless, these plays were performed in open defiance of the laws and against the wishes of many people. John Evelyn, for example, notes that on May 6, 1659, he went "to see a new opera, after the Italian way, in recitative music and scenes," and adds that "it was prodigious that in a time of such public consternation such a vanity should have been kept up or permitted. I being engag'd with company could not decently

⁴⁷ Page 36.

⁴⁸ John Parton, *Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St. Giles in the Fields*, p. 236:

"1659. Rec'd of Isack Smith, which he received at the Cockpitt playehouse, of sev'all offenders, by order of the justices £3. 8. 6."

This would indicate that at least thirteen persons had been convicted of attending plays at the Cockpit.

resist going to see it, tho my heart smote me for it." The opera here referred to was either Davenant's old *Siege of Rhodes* or the new *History of Sir Francis Drake*.

According to the story told by John Downes, in his *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708)⁴⁹ and since repeated by all historians, in the year 1659—that is, after February 4, 1659/60, when General Monk entered London,⁵⁰ and before March 25, 1660, when the old-style year began—John Rhodes, a bookseller who had formerly been wardrobe-keeper to the King's Company at Blackfriars, secured a license from General Monk to form a company of actors to perform plays at the Cockpit; while a second company was formed at the Red Bull, and a third at Salisbury Court.⁵¹ There is, however, evidence to show that the performances were illegal. The accuracy of Downes's statement is doubtful. He tells, for example, that in Rhodes's company were "Mr. Lilliston" and "Mr. Turner." But Lilleston, Turner, and Rhodes himself were arrested, and presumably tried, for violating the laws against stage-plays after the date of General Monk's entry.

Thomas Lilleston, who is described as a weaver of St. Andrews Holborn,—a mainstay of Rhodes's company,—was examined before the Sessions of Middlesex on February 4, 1660 (the day of Monk's entrance), having been "charged by Gervis Jones to act a publique stage-play this present 4th of February in the Cock-Pitt in Drury Lane in the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Feildes contrary to the law in that case made." Recognizances of £40 from him and of £20 each from two bondsmen were required for his appearance at the next Sessions.⁵² That neither Monk nor his council wholly approved of the theatre appears from an Order in Council forbidding stage-players to act issued by them on April 23.⁵³ Little or no attention, however, was paid to the order. But on May 12 Antony Turner and Edward Shatterel, two well-known actors, were placed under bond of £100 each to appear at the next Quarter Ses-

⁴⁹ Ed. Joseph Knight, 1886, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Whitelocke's *Memorials*, 1732, p. 694.

⁵¹ Cf. R. W. Lowe, *Thomas Betterton*, 1891, p. 60; Ward, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, III, 293; Schelling in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, VIII, 135; Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, pp. 307, 365; etc.

⁵² *Middlesex County Records*, ed. J. C. Jeaffreson, III, 282; Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 366.

⁵³ Whitelocke's *Memorials*, p. 699.

sions of Middlesex to answer "for the unlawfull mainteining of Stage-playes and enterludes att the Redd Bull in St. John's Street." Turner admitted that his company was paying one pound a day for the rental of the Red Bull, above what they had agreed to pay for charity and for repairing the highways.⁵⁴ On July 28, John Rhodes, manager of the Cockpit, was fined £4. 6s., an amount representing a charge of twopence "for every day the[y] play'd, till the 28th of July, 1660,"—proof, apparently, that the Cockpit players had acted 516 days, or continually during 1659 and 1660.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the Salisbury Court playhouse had reopened, perhaps as early as June, 1660;⁵⁶ and from Pepys's *Diary* it appears that the Red Bull was giving public performances on August 3, 1660, the Cockpit on August 18.

More information about the years 1659-1660 must be forthcoming before safe generalizations can be made. But it is evident that, whatever their legal status, two theatres, perhaps three, were regularly open during these years.

It would be a mistake to think that the restoration of the stage to a legal status brought unmitigated joy to all England. Instead, rigid Puritans found their objections to plays increased by the many years in which theatres had been proscribed. In 1661, a certain L. G., in his *Essayes And Characters*, thus described actors:

A Player.

Is an Artificial fool, that gets his living by making himself ridiculous; he hath lickt up the Vomit of some drunken Poet & (like a jugler) casts it up again before a thousand Spectators. He is the ignorant mans Wonder, the rich mans Jester, and the Devils Factor, that by a strange delusion sends men laughing to hell.

On May 7, 1660, just when England was ostensibly rejoicing over the imminent return of Charles II, a Newcastle Puritan wrote sorrowfully to a friend:

Sir, the Countrey, as well as the Town, abound with vanities; now the reins of Liberty and Licentiousness are let loose; *May-Poles*, and *Playes*, and *Juglers*, and all things else now pass current.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Middlesex County Records*, III, 279-280; Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

⁵⁵ John Parton, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁵⁶ Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

⁵⁷ *The Lords Loud Call To England: Being a True Relation of some Late, Various, and Wonderful Judgments, or Handy-work of God* [August], 1660, p. 24 (Bodleian, Wood 643/3).

In July a remarkable event occurred at Oxford during the performance of a play, and was chronicled by one H. Jessey in a pamphlet called *The Lords Loud Call To England*.⁵⁸

There was Play acted by Schollars, wherein one acted the *Old Puritan*, he that acted that part, came in with a narrow band, short hair, and a broad hat; a *Boisterous fellow* comes after him, and trips up his heels, calling him *Puritan Rogue*; at which words, the *Old Puritan* shook off the dirt of his feet against him. Two of these Actors are also cut off; and he that acted the *Old Puritan* broke a vein, and vomited so much blood in the place, that they thought he would have died in the room, but he now lieth desperately sick. This is all very true.

Also a Woman that joyned with them in their Play is also dead.

Also from another in Oxford, it was thus written, July, 30. We had a Play acted in the University, against the *Puritans*, the cheif Actors therein were, Mr. *Ball* of Wadham, who died yesternight; and one *Glendal* of *Brazen-Nose*, who also is not like to live. . .

[Later intelligence has it] That Mr. *Glendal* also, one of the chief Actors in the Play is since dead.

But with Charles II's issuance of patents to Killigrew and Davenant on August 21, 1660, creating two companies of players, the history of the dramatic interregnum comes to an end, and the Puritans were utterly routed. Only with Jeremy Collier's *Short View* in 1698 did their inning return.

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⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.